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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of States parties

Egypt*

* For the initial report submitted by the Government of Egypt, see CEDAW/C/5/Add.10 considered by the Committee at its third session. For the second periodic report submitted by the Government of Egypt, see CEDAW/C/13/Add.2 considered by the Committee at its ninth session. For the third periodic report submitted by the Government of Egypt, see CEDAW/C/EGY/3 which will be considered by the Committee at its twenty-fourth session.

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INTRODUCTION

Egypt consistently demonstrates every respect for the full and effective implementation of international human rights treaties and conventions in all international and domestic forums. It also respects the diverse nature of societies and the heritage, cultural characteristics and prevailing values stemming from their historical development. These should not, however, conflict with the values that the international community protects by means of these instruments, as was stressed in the report of the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights.

This unshakeable policy represents Egypt's national view and its strategy with regard to human rights and freedoms at the domestic, regional and international levels. This view has been expressed in the Egyptian reservations to some provisions of the instruments in question, which have the purpose of ensuring their implementation while at the same time preserving the national particularities of Egyptian society along with those of its historical and cultural customs, characteristics and creeds that do not conflict with or infringe upon the instruments but are decidedly within the scope of the protection they provide to rights and freedoms.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the cultural, historical and ideological resources of the Egyptian people were an important factor in paving the way for Egyptian women to launch the movement for their advancement. Supported by a historical background of positive participation in building civilization in the Nile Valley, Egyptian women have played a vital part in the revival and development process. They are capable of genuine partnership in confronting all life's challenges and using society's resources in order to promote the advancement of women and realize their current and future ambitions. The women's movement has been continuously supported and encouraged by all governmental and non-governmental institutions and by all groups and classes of the Egyptian people.

In the spirit of the foregoing, and further to the previous reports submitted by Egypt to the Committee, this report shall illustrate the efforts that continue to be made to strengthen the

participation of Egyptian women in the development of their country, as described in two parts, namely:

Part One: General information on the situation of women in Egypt

Part Two: Information relating to the principles enshrined in the Convention and the provisions of each of its articles.

It should be noted that this combined report containing the fourth and fifth periodic reports for the period 1994 to 1998 does not contain a part devoted to questions and recommendations arising from consideration of Egypt's previous report in so far as consideration of Egypt's third periodic report (CEDAW/C/EGY/3) has not yet been completed, and the relevant part can be found therein.

In addition, in order to avoid repetition, certain sections of the present report will refer to the third periodic report.

PART ONE

GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN EGYPT

Section I: General indicators

Section II: Government policy on the elimination of discrimination against women

Section III: Legal and other measures relating to the implementation of the Convention

Section IV: Authorities guaranteeing effective compliance with the principle of equality between men and women, and the means of redress available to women

Section V: Promotion of the exercise by women of all their fundamental rights and freedoms

Section VI: The legal status of the provisions of the Convention in the Egyptian legal system

Section VII: Dissemination of information on human rights instruments in Egypt

I. GENERAL INDICATORS

The following table shows the current situation with respect to a number of general indicators together with the figures as given in Egypt's third periodic report for purposes of comparison.

	Item	Previous situation	Current situation
1	Population	59 million (1993)	61.4 million (1996)
2	Women as percentage of population	98.5 males for every 100 females	47.4 (1996)
3	Number of political parties	13	15
4	Number of ministers	34	32
5	Number of women in the Cabinet	Two (Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Scientific Research)	Two (Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Environmental Affairs)
6	Female illiteracy rate	57.41% (1992)	51% (1996)
7	Rate of enrolment for compulsory education	91.41% (1992)	1998/1999 100.23% (boys) 97.64% (girls) 98.97% (total)
8	Drop-out rates for	1990/91	1998/99
	a) Primary education	Girls	1.21%
		Boys	0.7%
		Total 3.85%	0.98%
9	b) Preparatory education	Girls 11.5%	3.73%
		Boys 9.9%	2.65%
		Total 10.8%	3.23%

The success of the Government and public sector in promoting the exercise by women of all their fundamental rights and freedoms can be seen in the above indicators, which highlight the reduction in female illiteracy and school drop-out rates and the raising of rates of enrolment for compulsory education to satisfactory levels as well as the continued appointment of women to ministerial positions in the country.

II. GOVERNMENT POLICY ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Egypt began its modern renaissance by building a State influenced by Western culture. An enlightened movement was the standard-bearer for this goal in opposition to those who rejected progress. Throughout the changes of political system and authority in Egypt from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present day, there has been sustained support for this enlightened movement, one of the most important goals of which was to guarantee the rights of women and encourage them to take their proper place in society.

Ever since Egyptian women began their renaissance movement at the beginning of this century, the Egyptian Government has taken whatever steps were necessary and appropriate to support, strengthen and develop all enlightened tendencies which supported and assisted that movement. The 1923 Egyptian Constitution gave expression to the clear inclination of the Egyptian Government and people when it stipulated, in article 19, that primary education was compulsory for Egyptian boys and girls. The 1956 Constitution reflected the achievements and success of the women's movement at that time at the local and international levels. It also took into account the provisions of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, adopted by the General Assembly in 1952. In article 31, it laid down the principle of equality and non-discrimination on grounds of gender, origin, language, religion or ideology. In article 19, it established the obligation of the State to help women reconcile their duties to their families and their work.

Pursuant to this constitutional principle, in 1956 the law on the exercise of political rights stated that women had the right to vote and to stand for election to parliament and all local councils. In 1971, the present Egyptian Constitution made a commitment, awaited at that time by the people, to two human rights instruments: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Articles 11 and 40 are in direct response to the principles of those instruments, and articles 10 and 11 respectively introduced the State's obligation to protect the mother and child and to guarantee the equality of men and women in the political, social, cultural and economic spheres.

Legislation was introduced pursuant to the aforesaid constitutional principles that confirmed the precepts of equality and non-discrimination against women. (The relevant legislation will be discussed in detail in chapter III of this part). At the practical level, these principles have found expression in a number of governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions that endeavour to encourage and support the genuine enjoyment by women of all their rights and to develop their effective participation in all spheres on an equal footing with men. (This will be discussed in detail in chapter V of this part).

Egyptian women have made a number of significant gains as a result of State support in various areas of the women's movement. Similarly, the State's efforts to elaborate women-oriented development plans, particularly in education and the eradication of illiteracy, have, by controlling the population-growth rate, had an impact on the realization of one of the State's goals. As a result, Egypt has been awarded the United Nations Population Award.

Egyptian women's important and influential participation in the general workplace has culminated in appointments to two ministries in the current Cabinet and an increase in the number of women appointed to positions of authority in various sectors in the country, both governmental and non-governmental.

State efforts with regard to the eradication of female illiteracy and the lowering of school drop-out rates have had notable success. Female illiteracy has been reduced to acceptable levels and school drop-out rates have fallen.

I. LEGAL AND OTHER MEASURES RELATING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

In 1932, out of commitment to its vision of and national strategy concerning non-discrimination against women and their equality in all fields, and in accordance with the provisions of successive Egyptian constitutions since 1923, Egypt acceded to the International Agreement of 18 May 1904 for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic and to the International Convention of 4 May 1910 for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, both of which were signed at Paris. In 1955, it acceded to the Protocol amending those instruments. In 1959, pursuant to Republican Decree No. 884, Egypt acceded to the Convention that replaced the two previous instruments, namely the convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, adopted by the General Assembly in 1949.

Subsequently, in 1967, Egypt signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 and acceded thereto in 1971. Pursuant to Republican Decree No. 345 of 1981, it acceded to the Convention on the Political Rights of Women and, pursuant to Republican Decree No. 434 of 1981, it acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. At the time, and in accordance with the provisions of articles 28 and 29 of the Convention, Egypt made its reservations clear. The international instruments referred to above and the other human rights instruments to which Egypt has acceded form a legislative basis in the Egyptian legal system, since, with their publication in the Official Gazette following the necessary constitutional procedures, these instruments became Egyptian law in accordance with the provisions of article 151 of the present Constitution. (The Convention on

the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was published in Arabic in issue No. 51 of the Official Gazette on 17 December 1981, and came into effect as of 18 October 1981). Below we will refer to some of the relevant basic Egyptian laws.

1. Political rights

Article 130 of Law No. 73 of 1956 on the exercise of political rights stipulates that all Egyptian men and women over 18 years of age may personally exercise their specific political rights. Article 4, as amended by Law No. 4 of 1979, obliges men and women to register as voters. (This is in accordance with the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, and it preceded Egypt's accession thereto).

2. The Labour Code

The law concerning private sector employment

Article 130 of Law No. 97 of 1959, concerning the Labour Code, stipulates that all its provisions apply to working women, with no distinction as to job. Law No. 137 of 1981 (the present Labour Code) does the same. In accordance with the International Labour Organization conventions concerning the employment of women, the law prohibits the employment of women in jobs that could damage their health or morals or in any other job to be specified by the relevant ministries. The Law requires any employer of more than 100 women to set up or share the cost of providing a nursery, and in article 174 it provides penalties for any infringement of the provisions regarding the employment of women.

The law concerning civilian employment in the State and public sectors

There are no provisions in the two laws regulating employment in the State or public sectors that prejudice the principle of equality between men and women. On the contrary, both laws accord women special privileges, allowing them to reconcile their duties to their families and their work.

Rights of working mothers

The distinction is made in a section of the Children's Act No. 12 of 1996 devoted to working women between the conditions of employment of women in the government and public sectors and those in the private sector. The Act further guarantees women the right to the following privileges:

The right to take three months' maternity leave on full pay three times during her working life (art. 70).

For the two years following the date of delivery, the right to take two rest breaks for one hour on full pay in order to breastfeed her child (art. 71).

The right to take unpaid leave of two years on three occasions during her working life for the purpose of childcare (art. 72).

3. Education

Article 15 of Law No. 139 of 1981, concerning education, grants the right to eight years of free elementary education to all Egyptian children (boys and girls) from the age of six. It obliges the State to make provision for this right and the parents or guardians to implement the obligation, in accordance with the relevant international instruments. Penalties for any infringement of the provisions of the Law by the parents or the guardians, irrespective of whether the child is male or female, are stipulated in article 19 of the same Law.

4. Civil capacity

In accordance with the provisions of the Civil Code and related laws, all Egyptians, male and female alike, enjoy civil rights in conformity with the legally established provisions relating to capacity, from the point of view of the terms on which they can or cannot be invoked. In this respect, there is no discrimination and there are no restrictions that apply to women and not to men. Marriage does not annul or otherwise affect these rights and does not place any restrictions on their exercise by women.

Laws of litigation

The right to litigate is guaranteed to both men and women on an equal basis without differentiation, discrimination or preferential treatment. The laws relating to litigation make no distinction in this respect: Egyptian women have the right of recourse to the law in all its forms and at all levels, the right to act as a witness in court and the right to benefit from the relevant court and legal assistance systems. Pursuant to Law No. 1 of 2000, concerning the regulation of certain rules and procedures relating to litigation in cases of personal status law, the capacity to litigate in matters of guardianship is guaranteed to any person over 15 years of age.

5. Social insurance

The laws relating to social insurance and pensions make no distinction between men and women with regard to the rights which they provide. Rather, in some cases, a woman has the right to combine her own pension with that of her husband or her brother. Working women are accorded special privileges under the Children's Act No. 12 of 1996. Governmental and public sector institutions are obliged to pay a woman's statutory social insurance contributions during any periods of unpaid special leave which she may take in order to raise her children.

6. Nationality law

In accordance with the provisions of the Nationality Law (Law No. 26 of 1975), anyone, male or female, who is born in Egypt to an Egyptian mother and whose father is of unknown nationality or is stateless is entitled to Egyptian nationality. Nationality is also granted to anyone who is born to an Egyptian mother and whose paternity cannot be legally established, to anyone who is born in Egypt to two parents of unknown nationality and to anyone who is born outside Egypt to an Egyptian mother and whose father is of unknown nationality or is stateless. A foundling in Egypt is deemed to have been born there failing proof to the contrary (arts. 2 and 3). This is in accordance with the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and

the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and it is intended to prevent dual nationality and resulting cases of conflict of laws at the international level. The provisions of this Law address the issue of nationality in the case of the marriage of a foreign man and an Egyptian women or of an Egyptian man and a foreign woman by establishing the basic principle that Egyptian nationality may neither be imposed on a non-Egyptian woman without her consent nor withdrawn from her on termination of her marriage to an Egyptian unless she reverts to her original nationality. An Egyptian woman who marries a foreigner loses her nationality only if she wishes to do so and if the law of nationality of her husband's country confers nationality on her. She nevertheless has the right to retain her Egyptian nationality if she so wishes or to revert to it on termination of her marriage. The law also stipulates that the withdrawal or forfeiture of nationality in the cases specified shall have no effect on any person other than the individual involved.

Where the nationality of a minor has been changed to that of his or her father, the law provides that he or she may choose to revert to his or her original nationality on reaching maturity. The first National Conference on Women in Egypt, held in 1994, recommended that consideration should be given to alleviating the difficulties faced by the children of an Egyptian mother and an alien father. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education promulgated Decree No. 353 of 20 December 1994. This exempted immigrant students who were the offspring of divorced or widowed Egyptian mothers and who could demonstrate need from the payment of fees in State schools, thereby according them full equality with Egyptians in regard to financial treatment. The Decree also provided for the reduction of such fees by one half for the children of Egyptian women in other categories.

7. Health care

None of the laws relating to health care or health insurance contains any reference to discrimination between men and women with respect to the care patients should receive or the benefits to which they are entitled.

The State makes every effort to guarantee the welfare of women and children through family planning services and special pre- and post-natal health care programmes.

Article 8 of the Children's Act No. 12 of 1996 makes it unlawful for any person other than a doctor or registered midwife to assist in the delivery of a baby, and stipulates the penalties for the infringement of such Act.

8. The Penal Code

The Egyptian Penal Code (Law No. 58 of 1937) categorizes all violence or attacks against women as crimes and regards the age of the victim and the degree of consanguinity or affinity between the victim and the assailant as aggravating factors in the assessment of the penalties.

Article 267 provides a penalty of short-term hard labour for cases of sexual assault on women, to be increased to life imprisonment with hard labour in cases where the assailant is an ascendant or guardian of the victim or her supervisor, or is working in her home. The law introduces the death penalty for the abduction of a woman through deception or by force if the victim is sexually assaulted (art. 290, as amended by Law No. 215 of 1980). Efforts aimed at eradicating the phenomenon of female abduction culminated in the promulgation of Law No. 14 of 1999 which abrogates previous legislation offering a pardon to the abductor in the event of marriage to the victim concerned.

The law provides for a penalty of three to seven years' hard labour for the rape of a person, male or female, whether by use or force or intimidation. Where the victim is under 16 or the offender is the victim's ascendant, guardian or supervisor or works in the victim's home, the penalty is the legal maximum. Where both of these conditions are met, the penalty is life imprisonment with hard labour (art. 269 on penalties).

Egyptian law penalizes abortion resulting from beating or abuse or induced by drugs or other means. The first offence is punished by short-term hard labour and the second by a prison sentence. These penalties may be applied to the woman if she is a willing party or places herself in the hands of

another. The penalty is increased to life imprisonment if the abortion is performed by a doctor or midwife (arts. 260-263 on penalties). Other forms of abuse, beating and violence are dealt with in articles 240 to 244 of the Penal Code, and they are categorized according to whether they are accidental or intentional and whether weapons or instruments are used and by the damage caused. The penalties for the acts in motion vary in severity in accordance with these criteria, and in this respect the law makes no distinction between men and women and its provisions apply without regard to marital status or consideration of kinship.

By articles 279 and 306 bis of the Penal Code, the legislature characterizes as a criminal anyone who commits an indecent act with a woman, even in private, or who does or says anything to a woman that offends her modesty. The penalty is imprisonment or a fine, and penalties are increased if the act is repeated within one year.

In order to combat the phenomenon of intimidation and the threat of use of force of violence against a wife, offspring or ascendants, the Egyptian legislature promulgated Law No. 6 of 1998 which criminalizes such acts, and stipulates a penalty therefor of at least two years' imprisonment, rising to five if the threat was made against a female or a minor of under 18 years of age.

9. Combating prostitution

Subsequent to Republican Decree No. 884 of 1959, by which Egypt acceded to the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, and pursuant to the provisions of the Convention, Law No. 10 of 1961, concerning the suppression of immorality, was promulgated. The Law characterizes as crimes incitement, procurement, enticement or seduction for the purpose of committing immoral acts or prostitution. Penalties are more severe when such acts are compounded by deception, force, intimidation or the abuse of power and when the victim is under 21 years of age (arts. 1 and 2 of the Law).

The Law also criminalizes enticement or procurement for the purpose of conveyance overseas or securing entry to the country of persons to be employed in prostitution (arts. 3 and 5). Penalties are increased in the aforesaid cases where the victim is under 16 or where the offender is the victim's ascendant, guardian or supervisor or works in the victim's home (art. 4).

The Law punishes: the provision of assistance to a woman in the practice of prostitution or the exploitation of the prostitution of others; attempts to commit the offences referred to; the keeping, management or rental of a building for such a purpose and investment or employment therein; and cases of recidivism (arts. 6 to 13 of the Law).

10. Commercial competence

The age of majority is the same for both civil and commercial purposes in Egyptian law (art. 44 of the Civil Code and art. 4 of the Commercial Code), namely 21 years of age for both men and women. This also applies to a woman's competence in this respect and to each spouse's individual property rights. The financial responsibilities of each remain separate.

Egyptian law requires a foreign spouse who engages in trade to declare the financial arrangements of his or her marriage.

11. Capacity for marriage and family responsibilities

In Egypt, marriage is a consensual contract requiring the full and explicit assent of the woman. The minimum legal age for marriage is 18 for men and 16 for women. Since it is a matter that relates to personal status, it is also subject to the provisions of the religious laws of each of the parties as they relate to validity and termination.

By law, women may have custody of their male children until the age of 10 and of their female children until the age of 12. The law provides for the possibility of extending a woman's custody of a male child until he is 15 and of a female child until her marriage. A father has the right to see his child throughout the period of maternal custody, and he remains responsible for financial support. In

accordance with the law of trusteeship, a woman may be the trustee or guardian of a minor, subject to legally specified circumstances and conditions.

IV. AUTHORITIES GUARANTEEING EFFECTIVE COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN, AND THE MEANS OF REDRESS AVAILABLE TO WOMEN

It is clear from the foregoing that, in accordance with the constitutional principles and legal precepts on which the Egyptian legal system is based, all State authorities are required in the performance of their functions to guarantee compliance with the principle of equality between men and women as embodied in article 40 of the present Constitution. Through its various bodies, the independent judicial authority provides women with full means of redress in accordance with the type of dispute and the parties involved, as set forth hereunder.

1. Supreme Constitutional Court

The legislative authority exercises its functions within the framework of compliance in the enactment of laws with the approved constitutional principles and provisions, including the principle of equality between men and women. The Supreme Constitutional Court is the means by which women may seek redress in respect of laws or ordinances enacted by the legislature which are in contravention of such principles. It is an independent judicial body established in accordance with the provisions of articles 174 to 178 of the Constitution, and it is unique in having the power to decide on the constitutionality of laws and ordinances and to interpret legislative and judicial texts in a manner binding on all State authorities. The annulment of any text deemed unconstitutional is effected by the publication in the Official Gazette, within the legally specified period, of Supreme Court judgements (Law No. 48 of 1979 concerning the Supreme Constitutional Court).

The Supreme Constitutional Court has issued a number of judgements relating to human rights in general and to the principle of equality between men and women in particular. Several

legislative texts have been declared unconstitutional, as has any special treatment with regard to access to higher education that entails the admission of members of specific groups in preference to others who are more qualified in terms of the established admissions criteria. Such action was deemed a violation of the principle of equality (judgement issued in case No. 106/1985, Constitutional Court, session of 29 June 1985).

The Court also found that article 134 of an ordinance concerning Orthodox Copts and article 109 of an ordinance concerning Armenian Orthodox Copts were unconstitutional in so far as the nursery age for children in both texts was lower than that stipulated under Muslim personal status law (judgement issued in case No. 74, session of 1 March 1998, and case No. 81 of session of 16 April 1998).

2. Administrative law (the Council of State)

In performing its functions with respect to the regulations and ordinances it issues, whether these affect members of the public individually or collectively and whether they concern services provides to citizens or formalities that citizens are obliged to complete, the executive authority is required to comply with established constitutional principles and legal norms, including the principle of equality between men and women. In this domain, women may seek redress under administrative law through the Council of State. This is an independent judicial body that decides administrative disputes and disciplinary actions (art. 172 of the Constitution). Law No. 47 of 1972, concerning the Council of State, assigns the tribunals of the Council of State the function of deciding on appeals brought by individuals or organizations for the annulment of administrative decisions and on applications for redress. They also review decisions relating to recruitment, promotion, salaries and allowances, separation, retirement and disciplinary action in the civil service.

The Law regards any refusal or failure of the administrative authorities to take a decision that they are required to take in accordance with the relevant laws and ordinances as itself constituting an

administrative decision (art. 10 of the aforementioned Law). The Law also establishes the means and stages of appeal against judgements and the implementation of final rulings issued under the relevant provisions of administrative law. The rulings and decisions of administrative courts are binding on all, and failure to implement them is a crime punishable under the provisions of the Egyptian Penal Code (art. 123).

3. Civil and criminal law

Relations between individuals are regulated, within the framework of the Constitution, by objective and disinterested legal rules that apply to all persons without differentiating between men and women. In accordance with Law No. 46 of 1972, the independent judicial authority, through its civil and criminal divisions, rules on all relevant disputes or crimes specified by the law. The judicial authority performs its function by applying the law to disputes brought before it in the light of existing constitutional principles, the Codes of Civil and Criminal Procedure and the rules governing the stages of appeal against judgements. The Law permits the aggrieved to take civil action for compensation before the criminal courts in cases involving statutory offences.

It should be noted that none of the laws relating to the administration of justice and capacity to take legal actions make any distinction between men and women with regard to the right of recourse and litigation or to the procedures and guarantees stipulated in their regard.

V. PROMOTION OF THE EXERCISE BY WOMEN OF ALL THEIR RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

In giving effect to Egypt's commitment to the principles enshrined in the Convention and to the Committee's recommendations (General Recommendation No. 6 of 1988) concerning the establishment of specialized and effective national agencies, perceptible progress has been made recently and there have been important and positive developments in Egypt that have strengthened the means available for the promotion of the enjoyment by women of all their basic rights. There have

been developments at the international and local levels and in the governmental and non-governmental sectors, as will be shown in detail hereunder.

1. Government action

Action by the government sector has been closely linked with Egypt's national policy for the advancement of women in all spheres. Such action has primarily had the goal of raising women's awareness of all the basic rights and fundamental freedoms guaranteed to them by the Constitution and the law with a view to ensuring the full and effective exercise of those rights and freedoms. The natural approach to such action was through advocacy of the following policies:

(a) Enforcement of the laws relating to education at the compulsory and other levels so as to improve attendance rates and eliminate absenteeism by creating an appropriate link between educational institutions and the social milieu;

(b) Modification and development of curricula by introducing the study of instruments relating to all human rights and fundamental freedoms at all levels of education;

(c) A focus on the eradication of illiteracy among women, particularly in rural areas, linking literacy programmes with the given environment and using appropriate methods;

(d) Development of suitable programmes that use the tremendous potential of radio and television and are adapted to the target audience in order to promote awareness of the rights of women in all spheres;

(e) Encouragement of the non-governmental sector to play a part in mobilizing voluntary efforts in developing the capacities necessary to train skilled personnel;

(f)Encouragement of international cooperation at all levels and use of relevant international expertise and resources;

(g) Creation of appropriate mechanisms at the national level to monitor plans in this domain and ensure the necessary coordination between all the ministries and State institutions concerned;

(h) Establishment of research centres to facilitate the development of appropriate plans and programmes and channel resources in a scientific manner so that the desired goals can be achieved.

These major policy goals of government action have given rise to a number of effective mechanisms to support and monitor the advancement of women in securing the exercise of all their rights, namely:

(a) The National Committee for Women, established in 1978 and reorganized in 1994 as the national agency responsible for Egyptian women's issues at the international and local levels;

(b) The National Council for the Mother and Child, established in 1988 as the official agency responsible for child-related issues, including, of course, issues relating to women as mothers;

(c) The Ministry of Population and Family Affairs to be responsible for such matters as family planning, mother and child health and health education, and the National Population Council, which is essentially concerned with these spheres;

(d) The National Institute for Adult Education, set up in 1991 to promote literacy among adults of all ages;

(e) Departments concerned with women's issues, established or strengthened at various times in the Ministries of Social Affairs, Health, Agriculture and Foreign Affairs and in the Central Statistical Organization, given expanded functions and encouraged to exchange international experts with counterpart agencies.

The National Council for Women was established pursuant to Republican Decree No. 90 of 2000, issued on 8 February 2000, and replaces the National Committee for Women established in 1978. An independent national body, the Council has responsibility for promoting the advancement of women and designing the necessary policies and programmes for their effective participation in society and the overcoming of negative attitudes and problems which hamper the movement in society. It is

also responsible for developing appropriate solutions to the obstacles that women continue to face, particularly in rural areas.

As a reflection of State policy with regard to women and as a result of the efforts of the aforesaid mechanisms, there was increased activity during the first half of 1994 in the domain of national action. A "National Dialogue" conference and a National Conference on Women were held and resulted in many important recommendations relating to women's issues. The relevant authorities are engaged in studying the recommendations and translating them into programmes of action, decisions or laws, in accordance with the legal requirements for each of them. (The recommendations will be discussed in detail in part two of this report). The World Assembly on Education was held in Egypt in September 1994, and issues concerning women's education, particularly in rural areas, had a prominent place in the discussion and in the recommendations adopted.

In the same time-frame, the International Conference on Population and Development was held in Cairo. Many of the topics discussed there concerned women, and all the Egyptian governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with women took part in the activities of the Conference and contributed to its final documents.

Under the heading "Policies for the Advancement of Egyptian Women", the second National Conference on Egyptian Women was held in 1996. In 1997, the National Committee for Women, in cooperation with research agencies, trade unions and political parties, prepared the conceptual framework for the inclusion of a female component in the State's fourth Five Year Plan covering the period 1997/98 to 2001/02. The framework, which reflects the real situation of women in Egypt, the indicators relating thereto, the goals that could be included in the Plan, and the policies that would support the realization of such goals, was then translated into programmes and projects by the ministries concerned. One section of the fourth Five Year Plan is devoted to mother- and childhood-oriented projects and investments, and another to projects for the advancement of women and

investments for their implementation. The third National Conference of Egyptian Women, entitled "Advancement of Rural Women", was held in 1998, and discussed the promotion of literacy, education, health, education about reproductive health, the advancement of rural women, the development of micro-enterprises and the promotion of rural women's awareness of their political, social and legal rights.

All the agencies concerned with women, particularly the National Council for Women, are engaged in studying the Conference's recommendations.

2. Action by non-governmental bodies

Law No. 153 of 1999, concerning non-governmental associations and bodies, supersedes Law No. 32 of 1964. It offers clear confirmation that the Government's policy of encouraging the non-governmental sector has had a noticeable impact on action by this sector. There has been an increase in the number of registered associations working in fields relating to the advancement of women, particularly those of family planning, the development of household resources (associations for "productive families"), the advancement of rural women, child-care, the care of the elderly, mother and child health care and various services.

In 1997, the number of registered associations had reached 14,748.

3. International cooperation

Through its official participation in all the relevant international and regional conferences, Egypt has sought to make a serious and effective contribution to international cooperation relating to women in all fields. It was quick to associate itself with the call for the convening of a Summit on the Economic Advancement of Rural Women and, in February 1992, it participated in the elaboration and adoption of the Geneva Declaration for Rural Women. The aforementioned government bodies concerned with women's affairs reached agreement with international institutions and organizations and specialized agencies on numerous programmes and plans for projects in the fields of education,

health, agriculture, childhood issues, family planning, training, social welfare, income generation and the advancement of rural women.

The Egyptian delegations to the international conferences on human rights (Vienna, 1993), population and development (Cairo, 1994) and social development (Copenhagen, 1995) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) took particular care that the respective final documents should include specific sections on the situation of women, the protection of women's rights, and the advancement of women.

VI. THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE CONVENTION IN THE EGYPTIAN LEGAL SYSTEM

Because of the affinity of its provisions with those of the Egyptian Constitution, the Convention that is the subject of the present report, like the other international conventions on human rights and freedoms, has the benefit of two important features.

(a) Because the provisions of the Convention regarding non-discrimination between men and women accord with the stipulations made in this respect in articles 11 and 40 of the Egyptian Constitution, the principle of equality did not merely become one legal rule among others when the Convention became part of Egypt's domestic law but became a constitutional precept to which all Egyptian laws must conform, given that they occupy a lower rank than the Constitution. Where such a law violates the principle of equality, the Constitution is violated and the law can be overturned by the Supreme Constitutional Court.

(b) In accordance with article 151, paragraph 1, of the Constitution, the President of the Republic has the authority to conclude treaties and communicate them to the People's Assembly accompanied by an appropriate statement. After it is ratified and published in accordance with established procedures a treaty has the force of law. Thus with Egypt's ratification of the Convention relevant to this report and its publication in the Official Gazette, it became the law of the land and all the authorities are bound to

implement it under the provisions of the Constitution. Since they took effect in Egypt as law on 18 October 1981, the provisions of the Convention in relation to other laws that are in effect in the country are subject to the established legal rules governing conflict of laws in its chronological aspect. These are applied by the judiciary when disputes of this kind are brought before it, binding rulings are issued, and failure or refusal to comply with these rulings is an offence punishable by law.

It is clear from the foregoing that, in Egypt, the provisions of the Convention have the protection afforded to a fundamental constitutional principle with regard to any legislation that is enacted in contravention thereof. As the law of the land, it also benefits from that fact that all authorities are obliged to apply its provisions. Anyone who suffers as a result of failure to apply those provisions may therefore have recourse to the law in accordance with the nature of the contravention and the procedures established for asserting the rights to which they give rise.

VII. PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS IN EGYPT

In general terms, publication and dissemination of human rights instruments in Egypt is effected following the ratification of and accession to an instrument such as the one that forms the subject of this report. Publication in the Official Gazette, which issues the texts in Arabic of all laws, republican decrees and international conventions, is an important means by which the public is provided with information about laws and the date on which they take effect in the country. Series and special issues of the Gazette are sold to the public through designated outlets for the sale of government publications. Postal subscriptions are also possible. The selling price is negligible, and is set at below cost.

The Official Gazette is considered an important periodical by public and private libraries, which assiduously include it among the authoritative reference texts in their holdings. The Gazette is equally important to all persons working in the legal profession, and, pursuant to article 188 of the Constitution, laws must be published therein within two weeks of the date of their enactment. Save as

otherwise provided, laws come into effect one month after the date of publication, and the provisions thereof can only be applied following the date on which the said laws come into effect (however, save in respect of the Penal Code, a majority of the People's Assembly may, in accordance with article 187 of the Constitution, make a contrary determination).

While publication in the Official Gazette is the means by which the Egyptian public is informed about laws, the dates of their enactment and the spheres to which they apply, the Gazette's primary audience is the legal professional. At the same time, however, international human rights instruments are of great importance for all sectors of Egyptian society. The Government is therefore particularly vigilant in complying with the provisions relating to awareness-raising and education about the said instruments. Its efforts to ensure that such instruments are implemented in a manner consistent with the lofty values which they express with regard to human rights and fundamental freedoms have focused primarily on social and educational mobilization as the only means of shaping the behaviour of future generations, instilling these values and rights in them, making them aware of the advantages that such values and rights offer to them and concerned about the consequences thereof.

Thus in Egypt today international human rights instruments such as the one that is considered in this report have become fundamental texts studied in Faculties of Law, the police force and national research centres. Those engaged in these studies will be directly involved in realizing their aims and implementing their provisions and will be the better equipped to defend them against others, using their talents to widen the sphere of influence of such instruments through the work that they undertake. At the same time, Egypt has carefully developed educational curricula at all levels so as to incorporate information about these instruments and the lofty aims and aspirations embodied therein.

It goes without saying that the State's efforts to eradicate illiteracy, in keeping with its national obligations under the Constitution, are an important and effective corollary to the publication of and promotion of awareness about human rights instruments. Such efforts make it easier for formerly

illiterate persons to learn for themselves about their rights and to form an attachment thereto. Inevitably, increasing numbers of people will thus be able to find out about their rights and to defend them.

Trade unions and non-governmental associations, which are legally constituted bodies present throughout the country, also play a leading part in raising awareness about these rights and freedoms, using methods and procedures consistent with the circumstances and nature of each profession, job or place of work concerned. Government and non-governmental endeavours aimed at promoting adult literacy in cooperation with media and cultural services throughout the country also play an important role in promoting awareness and disseminating information relating to international human rights instruments among citizens in all groups and classes.

As a reflection of these ongoing efforts, the State has demonstrated its commitment to informing the citizens about all human rights instruments and ensuring the dissemination of this culture at all levels and in all parts of the country, using methods which ensure that present generations are made aware of these rights and preparing and shaping future generations to be bound by them.

Details of what has been done within the framework of introducing human rights instruments, including the one that is the subject of this report, in educational curricula at all levels are found in part two of this report in the comments relating to article 15 of the Convention.

PART TWO

SPECIFIC INFORMATION IN RELATION TO EACH PROVISION OF THE CONVENTION

This part of the report will provide a detailed commentary on the Convention, article by article, noting any references made in part one or Egypt's Third periodic report where appropriate to avoid repetition.

Article 1

For the purposes of the present Convention, the term "discrimination against women" shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

The 1971 Egyptian Constitution adduces the principle of equality and non-discrimination as basic to human rights and fundamental freedoms. Articles 8, 11 and 40 embody this principle in a clear and unequivocal manner. Article 8 provides that the State shall guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens. Article 11 provides that the State shall enable a woman to reconcile her duties towards her family with her work in society and guarantee her equality with men in the spheres of political, social, cultural and economic life. Article 40 makes a general statement on the principle of equality to the effect that all citizens are equal before the law and stipulates that they are equal in respect of general rights and obligations without discrimination between them on grounds of gender, ethnic origin, language, religion or belief. Similarly, articles 64 and 65 of the Constitution stipulate that the rule of law shall be the basis of State authority, that the State shall be subject to the law, and that the independence and immunity of the judiciary are the basic guarantees that safeguard rights and freedoms. In its judicial practice, the Supreme Constitutional Court has considered that the principle of equality before the law, as set forth in successive Egyptian constitutions since that of 1923, including

the present Constitution, is intended to protect the rights and freedoms of citizens against forms of discrimination that would prejudice or restrict their exercise. The principle is therefore a means of establishing the same legal protection for all rights and freedoms, whether those enshrined in the Constitution or those accorded by the laws enacted by the legislature. The cases set out in article 40 of the Constitution, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex, ethnic origin, language, religion or belief, are not exhaustive and are mentioned only because they are the most common circumstances in real life. The principle of equality therefore applies to all forms of discrimination and to all rights and freedoms, whether established by the Constitution or by statute (ruling of 16 May 1992 in case No. 6/13 Q).

From these lofty constitutional principles, it is clear that the Egyptian legal system accords high priority to requiring all State authorities to guarantee women's equality with men in respect of all rights and duties and all other areas of life, without restrictions and irrespective of their marital status. This is over and above the State's guarantee that women will be able to reconcile their domestic duties with their work in society while ensuring compliance with Islamic law in this regard out of respect for the requirements of religious freedom. In Egypt, family matters belong to the sphere of personal status and they and disputes in their regard are subject to the internal laws of the community to which family members belong. The Egyptian Constitution thus accords with article 1 of the Convention, defining discrimination against women, with the provisions of article 4 (2), concerning the protection of maternity, and with article 5 (b), concerning family education.

Article 2

States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake:

(a) To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle;

(b) To adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women;

(c) To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination;

(d)To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation;

(e)To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise;

(f) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women;

(g) To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women.

Reference has already been made, in the observations on article 1 of the Convention, to the provisions of the Constitution that relate to the obligation of the State to guarantee the equality of men and women in all fields. The Supreme Constitutional Court, which monitors the constitutionality of laws, provides these constitutional precepts with judicial protection against infraction by any legislation that may be enacted.

In part one, chapter II, section 8 of this report, references are given to the provisions of the Penal Code that punish cases of violence against women.

Reference is also made in part one, chapter II, to the fact that State policy with regard to women is based on promoting progress by women in the exercise of all their rights.

All Egyptian laws must comply with the previously mentioned constitutional principles requiring that legal precepts should apply to everyone without discrimination between men and women and that certain cases of discrimination should be categorized as crimes, as mentioned in part one, chapter II, of this report.

The laws relating to litigation guarantee the right of women and men to have recourse to the law on an equal footing, without formal or procedural restrictions and without any restrictions based on marital status. They give women the right to have recourse to the law in the event of any contravention of or departure from the relevant constitutional precepts, and women may seek constitutional redress to annul a statute that violates the principles, established by the Constitution, of their equality with men. Women may also seek redress and compensation under criminal law in the case where the violation of their rights and freedoms constitutes a criminal offence. In cases involving compensation, personal status or family matters, women may seek redress under civil law; and in those involving the annulment of or compensation for an administrative decision, they may approach the administrative courts.

In the judgements they issue, the members of the judiciary, in all categories and at all levels, are obliged to apply the laws in effect in the country. These include the Convention relevant to this report, since, as previously states, it is regarded as being such a law. The judiciary is independent and enjoys certain immunities, and intervention in its affairs is forbidden. Its judgements may be enforced by power of compulsion under the legally established circumstances and conditions, and failure to comply with them is regarded as a crime (arts. 72, 115 and 178 of the Constitution).

In keeping with the aforesaid constitutional precepts and principles of law, and pursuant to the recommendations made by the National Conference on Women and the General Conference for National Dialogue, the relevant authorities are currently considering the following legislative matters:

1. Within the context of efforts to resolve the problem of the nationality of a child born to an Egyptian mother and a foreign father, the Minister of Education issued a decree (No. 353) on 20 December 1994 exempting immigrant students who are the offspring of divorced or widowed Egyptian mothers and who could demonstrate need from the payment of fees in State schools, thereby according

them the same treatment as Egyptian nationals. The Decree also provided for the reduction of fees by one half in other cases.

2. With the enactment of the Children's Act No. 12 of 1996, certain practices that are widespread in less educated communities were made criminal offences. The Act makes it illegal for anyone except a doctor or registered midwife to deliver a baby and stipulates the penalties for its infringement.

3. Law No. 1 of 2000 seeks to simplify litigation procedures in cases of personal status law, alleviating the suffering of women by requiring the Nasser Bank to pay maintenance that has been awarded to them and raising income tax in order to ensure implementation of these provisions.

4. All penal laws (the Penal Code and the special laws that designate certain acts as criminal offences) specify criminal acts and their chief elements and the stipulated punishment. The judge nevertheless has the right, following a conviction, to impose an appropriate penalty that falls between the legally established minimum and maximum. The Code of Criminal Procedure also provides guarantees for all stages of indictment, trial and appeal in accordance with each type of crime and the legally established conditions. In none of the foregoing conditions is any reference made to a distinction or differentiation to be made between men and women.

5. The Code of Criminal Procedure does, however, single out women in its provisions relating to penalties in the case where a woman is pregnant. The Prisons Law contains the same provisions, and sentences with hard labour for women are served in prisons and not in the penal colonies where men are required to serve this punishment.

3. Difficulties relating to implementation of legislation concerning equality between men and women

The aforementioned constitutional and legislative principles, to which the legislature is committed, undoubtedly require efforts to overcome all the obstacles created by the negative aspects of some prevailing customs and concepts, the combination of which is impeding achievement of the desired development and progress. Accordingly, the Government has formulated national plans,

programmes and measures to overcome and eliminate those obstacles. In the light of the recommendations of the Beijing Conference concerning the need for government policies to take account of the views of women, a female component has been included in the Socio-Economic Development Plan with a view to ensuring gender equality and the advancement of women.

The purpose of the inclusion of a female component in the State's overall plan is to bridge the gender gap through the economic, social and political empowerment of women and the improvement of their education and health, which will increase the country's ability to mobilize its latent productive resources since women constitute half of the labour force. It will also help to increase investment and income growth rates and improve the human development indicators in various fields.

The conceptual framework of the female component, which was formulated by a group of researchers representing all ideological trends, academic institutes, universities, trade unions and private associations, covered the following aspects:

(a) The indicators of the present situation of Egyptian women in various fields;

(b) Definition of the aims of the advancement of women in the light of the present situation;

(c) Proposal of a set of policies that the plan could adopt in order to help achieve those aims;

(d) The need to accord priority to the categories in need of special care, namely rural women and female children.

The main achievements that the State has made in its endeavours to promote equality between men and women are as follows:

1. An increase in the proportional participation by women in the various fields of economic development, particularly industrial production, in order to help poor women;

2. Modification and adaptation of vocational education and training programmes in a manner consistent with the needs of women and the requirements of the labour market;

3. Support for small projects undertaken by poor women who are family providers, by facilitating their access to loans, education and training in order to improve their standard of living.

4. Encouragement and support of non-governmental associations the main aims of which include enhancement of the socio-economic situation of women.

The national women's conferences that are held by specialized agencies every two years regularly evaluate those endeavours, determine the extent to which the relevant plans have been successful, identify and try to eliminate the obstacles impeding the achievement of those aims, and reset the priorities of those aims in the light of the indicators compiled by the specialized researchers or the actual problems which women face in their lives.

Article 3

States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

The continued advancement of women and their exercise of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal footing with men depends, as a matter of course, on the existence of mechanisms that promote such development, are conscious of its requirements and parameters and are capable of implementing and following up programmes and of dealing with problems.

In accordance with established constitutional principles and pursuant to existing national policies with regard to the advancement of women in all fields as well as the general recommendations of the Committee (general recommendation No. 6 of 1988 and recommendation No. 9 of 1989), the Egyptian State has established a number of institutions and agencies concerned with women's issues, as described hereunder.

1. The Women's Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs was established in 1977 pursuant to the recommendations of the World Conference of the International Women's Year, held in Mexico City in 1975. The Department develops the policies and programmes necessary for the advancement of

urban and rural women, monitors reports of women's activities in the local news, gathers information on issues relating to women and their advancement in all fields, promotes positive and essential changes in prevailing attitudes and engages in international cooperation in that regard, and studies the recommendations of international and regional conferences on women. The Department has undertaken a number of local projects in pursuit of its goals, including a project on rural girl scouts and women's clubs and projects for the advancement of rural women that provide them with income-generating skills and train them in small-scale production. The Department has also established a documentation centre for women's issues.

2. The Ministry of Health has established a Department for Mother and Child Care. Among its concerns are the promotion of women's health, health education and the provision of the medical services necessary for women during pregnancy, delivery and while breastfeeding.

3. In cooperation with international organizations and agencies, the Ministry of Agriculture has set up a policy and coordination unit for women's agricultural activities. Its activities include the dissemination of agricultural information, the improvement of livestock, the provision of loans and the promotion of child-nutrition programmes with a view to raising health standards in rural communities.

4. In 1978, the National Committee for Women was established as a national planning and coordination mechanism. It brought together representatives of all relevant ministries, agencies and non-governmental women's organizations and was responsible for monitoring the implementation of national programmes and plans for the advancement of women, proposing measures to promote the participation of women in all aspects of life and elaborating and following up the necessary programmes.

Pursuant to a February 1994 decision of the Prime Minister, the Council was reorganized in order to consolidate and expand its work and affirm its national role.

5. In 1987, the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics established a division of research on women and children to conduct studies on relevant issues.

6. In 1988, with a view to achieving the more effective complementarity of the ministries concerned with mothers and children, the National Council for the Mother and Child was established under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister and with members drawn from the relevant ministries. Its functions include the review of legislation relating to women and children and the formulation of the necessary plans for the advancement of children and women, with particular emphasis on rural women.

7. In 1992, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a Department of Human Rights and International social and Humanitarian Affairs whose jurisdiction includes activities relating to women and women's rights at the international level, the United Nations and its treaty bodies and specialized agencies and social issues relating to the family and to mothers and children.

8. The Ministry of Population and the Family was established in 1993. Its functions as they relate to the advancement of women include family-planning projects, mother and child health, public awareness campaigns and health education. The Supreme Council for Population was subsequently established as an independent body with special responsibility for the discharging of these functions.

9. The non-governmental sector has made gains as a result of the State policy of encouraging the numerous organizations working in different fields of relevance to women's issues. There are now more than 420 such organizations, working mainly in the governorates of Cairo and Alexandria. Organizations involved in social work in the broadest sense of the term, of which there were 14,748 in 1997, also engage in numerous activities that are of interest to women. All of the mechanisms mentioned thus far have had notable successes in their fields of activity since they were established, and these will be cited in the commentary on the relevant articles of the Convention.

10. The success achieved by those working for the advancement of women culminated in June 1994 with the convening by the reorganized National Committee for Women, with Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak,

wife of the President of the Republic, as its President, of the first National Conference on Women in Egypt. All official and non-governmental organizations concerned with women at the national or regional levels took part in the Conference, and it adopted the first Declaration on Women in Egypt. The Declaration contains many recommendations that are currently being studied by the relevant State bodies prior to the preparation of the plans and programmes necessary for their implementation. Focusing on policies for the advancement of women, the second National Conference on Women in Egypt was held in 1996, while the third Conference of 1998 was devoted to rural women's advancement. At the time of writing, preparations were under way for the fourth Conference, to be held in March 2000.

11. The National Women's Council was established pursuant to Republican Decree No. 90 of 8 February 2000 and takes the place of the National Women's Committee. Its functions are described hereunder.

(a) Recommendation of a general policy targeted at society at large and constitutional institutions in the sphere of the advancement of women, their economic and social empowerment and the inclusion of their work in the overall development programme.

(b) Elaboration of a draft national plan for the advancement of women and the solution of problems related thereto.

(c) Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of general policies on women and submission of proposals and comments to specialized agencies in this domain.

(d) Expression of views on draft laws and decrees concerning women prior to their submission to the relevant authority, and preparation of proposals relating to draft laws and decrees necessary for the advancement of women.

(e) Submission of views concerning all agreements relating to women.

(f) Representation of women at international events and in international organizations responsible for issues relating to women.

(g) Establishment of a documentation centre responsible for gathering information, public statements, studies and research on women and for undertaking research and studies in this field.

(h) Convening of conferences, congresses and round tables to discuss women-specific issues;

(i) Organization of training sessions to promote awareness of the role of women in society and their rights and duties;

(j) Publication of periodicals and other printed matter relating to the aims and functions of the Council.

These achievements by the governmental and non-governmental sectors reflect the high degree of importance which now attaches to the advancement of women, the erosion of obstacles and entrenched attitudes and the opening up of all spheres to women so that they may play their part in the country in the service of their society.

Article 4

1. Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.

2. Adoption by States Parties of special measures, including those measures contained in the present Convention, aimed at protecting maternity shall not be considered discriminatory.

I. Temporary special measures

Reference is made to Egypt's Third periodic report, particularly with respect to the areas set forth hereunder.

II. Measures aimed at protecting maternity

In Egypt there are numerous laws and government regulations concerning measures aimed at recognizing and protecting women as mothers, the most salient of which are described hereunder.

1. State recognition for mothers

The standing Committee for the Observance of Mother's Day was established in 1969 to select exemplary mothers at the governorate and national levels and award valuable prizes to the winners. The State also sponsors an annual official observance of the Day and presents awards.

2. Motherhood and the labour laws

In conformity with the principles enunciated in articles 10 and 11 of the Constitution, namely that the State shall guarantee the protection of motherhood and that women shall be enabled to reconcile their duties to their families with their work responsibilities, the laws governing employment in both public and private sectors provide certain rights for women. The Children's Act No. 12 of 1996 systematizes the laws governing the conditions of employment of women in various jobs, as described hereunder.

The right to take three months' maternity leave on full pay on three occasions during her working life (art. 2).

The right to take two rest breaks of one hour on full pay for the two years following delivery for breastfeeding (art. 71).

The right, during her working life, to take three periods of two years' leave without pay for the purpose of child rearing (art. 72).

With regard to special privileges for working women, Prime Ministerial Decree No. 187 of 2000 stipulates that a woman may, if she so wishes, apply for permission to work half the official number of working days, retaining the right to pay half the taxes and receive half of the collective benefits and

overtime pay accruing to her colleagues, and that management shall be required to accede to her request.

3. Laws relating to criminal proceedings and prisons

(a) The possibility of postponing the imposition of penalties involving imprisonment until two months after childbirth; and, in the case where pregnancy becomes evident during a period of imprisonment, the treatment of the prisoner as if she was in protective custody (art. 485, Criminal Proceedings);

(b) The possibility of postponing the imposition of a penalty involving imprisonment on the wife in the case where both spouses are sentenced and they have a young child (art. 488, Criminal Proceedings);

(c) The requirement that a pregnant prisoner should be treated well, particularly with respect to nutrition, work and sleep, and that the necessary health care should be provided to ensure that this is done (art. 19 of the Prisons Law);

(d) The right of a female prisoner to keep her child with her until it reaches the age of two (art. 20 of the Prisons Law).

4. Laws concerning insurance and pensions (Law No. 79 of 1975)

The Law gives a widow the right to the pension of her deceased husband or to an allowance from her former husband in the case where she has been divorced without her consent. In the latter case, the marriage shall be considered as continuing to exist for a certain period of time, provided that she does not remarry, and the allowance is restored should she be divorced again.

5. Health care

As soon as she becomes pregnant, a woman is entitled to benefit from the comprehensive health care provided by the Ministry of Health network of health centres and offices and by the non-governmental organizations scattered throughout the country. The required inoculations are provided

to pregnant women and to children, as are the requisite health care, health education and family-planning services. In 1998, such services were provided to approximately 98 per cent of the population. The Egyptian Government has made important gains in this field by means of health promotion plans and programmes, and has participated in media information campaigns. Major indicators of the gains made, as given in 1997 and 1998 Demographic Health Surveys, are as follows:[1]

(a) A drop in the fertility rate from 5.28 per cent in 1980 to 3.4 per cent in 1998, and an increase in the percentage of women using contraception from 24.2 in 1980 to 51.8 in 1998;

(b) A 128.8 per cent rise in life expectancy at birth for mothers from 52 in 1980 to 66.4 in 1998;

(c) A rise in the percentage of expectant mothers who had been immunized to 70.1 per cent in 1998, a five-fold increase over the 1988 level;

(d) A rise in the percentage of children immunized from 68 in 1985 to 84.3 in 1998;

(e) A decrease in maternal mortality from 320 per 100,000 in 1986 to 174 in 1993;

(f) A drop in the percentage of expectant mothers suffering from anaemia from 20 in 1986 to 16 in 1991.

The "National Dialogue" conference, held in March 1994, and the first National Conference on Women, held in June 1994, made a number of recommendations in this regard, and the relevant national authorities are studying these closely and seeking ways and means of implementing them.

Article 5

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures:

(a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority of superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;

[1] Demographic Health Survey-1997-1998

(b) To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases.

Government policy on customs and practices constituting social and cultural patterns that hinder the advancement of women and the strengthening of their role in society takes two main approaches:

(a) Education and public-awareness activities;

(b) Rural development.

The State's efforts in this field have achieved notable success. By 1996, female illiteracy had declined from 62 per cent in 1986 to 51 per cent; female enrolment in elementary education rose from 91.41 per cent in 1992 to 97.64 per cent in 1998; and the figures for females as a percentage of all those enrolled had risen to 46.7 per cent at the elementary level, 46.7 per cent at the preparatory level and 49.7 per cent at the secondary level. The electronic media, in parallel with the educational system, play an important role with their public-awareness programmes on harmful practices and fallacies with regard to women or the family and on health and the environment. These programmes are directed mainly at rural areas where illiteracy is prevalent and are presented in a simplified manner appropriate to their audience in order to convey the necessary message.

These plans have also had tangible results in the field of family planning, in promoting health education and in increasing the number of women and children immunized. Similarly, the efforts made by non-governmental organizations have been successful in encouraging income-generating activities, modifying patterns of consumption as they relate to nutrition and health care. All in all, such efforts have brought about considerable progress towards eliminating many harmful customs and practices, particularly in the fields of health care and family planning, and there has also been tangible progress with regard to everyday practices relating to child raising, child nutrition, the use of leisure by the members of the household and the development of a spirit of voluntarism through programmes serving the community.

Efforts to increase public awareness through media campaigns have also achieved notable success in lowering school drop-out rates, reducing population-growth rates and restricting female circumcision, a practice that continues in some remote areas.

Among the issues to which the State is currently paying special attention with a view to remedial action are the negative attitude of women towards engaging in political activity, the employment of rural women in the household or in temporary seasonal work and the marriage of under-age girls. The first National Conference on Women studied these questions and put forward ideas for proposed solutions that the State is considering with a view to taking appropriate measures for their implementation.

In the context of the efforts made in this regard, the Ministry of Education has modified school curricula to include in them coverage of all the human-rights instruments and rid them of any flaws caused by partiality, prejudice or the stereotyping of roles on the basis of gender and in order to ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of the roles of men and women in the family and of motherhood. With respect to violence against women in the home, in the workplace or in any other area of life, the Egyptian Penal Code ensures that women are fully protected against all forms of violence, whether assaults on the person or on honour, and against anyone who violates their modesty, even in private. The Penal Code also provides severe penalties in cases where the victim is a minor or where the offender is an ascendant or guardian of the victim or works in her home. Reference is made to the relevant articles in part one, chapter III, section *8*, of this report.

Violence against women is a sensitive issue that has been raised in various countries, including developed countries. Although Egypt has some surveys and statistics concerning violence, they do not accurately reflect the true situation, as many acts of violence are not officially reported. Moreover, in addition to sexual and physical violence, violence against women includes all forms of behaviour that

demean or disparage women, affirm their dependence and prevent them from asserting their identity in a natural way.

Forms of violence against women

Family violence

This is directed against girl children, who are prevented from playing and are forced to help with domestic tasks and serve their brothers. There is evident discrimination in the treatment of male and female children, without any regard for the adverse psychological effects of this discrimination..

Social violence against female children

This violence is illustrated by the phenomenon of the early marriage of girls under the legal age on the basis of short-term civil contracts. This phenomenon is widespread in the rural and least developed areas.

The phenomenon of female circumcision is a cruel and violent procedure practised against girls without their consent and without them being aware of its adverse future consequences. This phenomenon, which was once widespread in the rural and least developed areas, has largely been wiped out thanks to assiduous government measures, and now persists only in the remotest areas.

Measures taken to combat practices that are detrimental to women

(a) Law No. 1 of 2000, concerning the regulation of certain procedures relating to litigation in matter of personal status law, has been enacted to speed up the litigation procedure in this area of law with a view to ensuring that divorced women receive their entitlements, that wives are protected against violence on the part of their husbands and that relief is provided to women in distress by requiring the Nasser Bank to pay any maintenance that has been awarded to them, and raising the level of income tax in order to procure the resources needed to provide them with support in accordance with the law;

(b) Women's issues have been incorporated in the current Five-Year Plan, which contains a component devoted to Egyptian women;

(c) The Ministry of Education has issued an ordinance prohibiting beating or the infliction of physical harm at the pre-university stage of education;

(d) The Ministry of Health and Population has issued an ordinance prohibiting circumcision operations on females in hospitals and private clinics;

(e) The number of classes for the eradication of illiteracy has been increased and young girls are encouraged to enrol therein;

Some projects have been implemented to deal with the effects of violence against women. The Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund is conducting a campaign to stimulate public awareness of all acts of violence that are detrimental to women, including circumcision and beating. Rural women are being provided with the skills and know-how needed to encourage them to engage more extensively in cultural and income-generating activities. Their role in social development is being promoted through the collective mobilization of their endeavours with a view to increasing their income and developing their skills in a manner conducive to self-reliance and improvement of their living conditions.

The Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Health Organization have signed an agreement under the terms of which they will endeavour, in particular, to eliminate female circumcision and early marriage in view of the detrimental effects of these two customs on the physical and psychological health of female children.

Article 6

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.

In order to avoid repetition, reference is made to the detailed response concerning this item contained in Egypt's third periodic report.

Article 7

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women on equal terms with men, the right:

(a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;

(b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;

(c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

The Egyptian Constitution makes provision for the three rights stipulated in this article and they are regulated by relevant laws, as set forth hereunder.

I. Voting and eligibility for election

Article 62 of the Egyptian Constitution stipulates that citizens have the right to vote, to stand for election and to express their opinions in referendums, in accordance with the provisions of the law, and it states that participation in public life is a national duty. The legislation relating to this constitutional principle is described below.

1. Law No. 73 of 1956 accords the right to vote to all Egyptian citizens, male and female, over 18 years of age, so that they may express their opinion in referendums, in electing the President of the Republic and in voting for members of the People's Assembly, the Advisory Council and local councils. Article 4 of the Law was amended by Law No. 41 of 1979 to make it mandatory for both male and female citizens to register to vote on reaching the age stipulated, the registration of women previously having been optional. Penalties are imposed on those who fail to vote without good reason or deliberately do not register (arts. 1, 4, 39 and 40).

2. Law No. 40 of 1977, regulating political parties, makes it an offence to impose conditions for membership that discriminate on the basis of creed, racial origin, gender or social status (art. 5 (4)).

3. In keeping with the principle of equality, Law No. 38 of 1972, concerning the People's Assembly, establishes no conditions that would prevent women from standing for election to the Assembly and states only that a candidate must be on the electoral roll, as is required of all male and female citizens over 18 (art. 5).

4. Law No. 120 of 1980, concerning the Advisory Council, also contains no provisions that would prevent women for standing for election to the Council and imposes only those conditions that apply to membership of the People's Assembly (art. 6).

5. Law No. 43 of 1979, on the system of local government, applies the same principles to local council elections at all levels (art. 7). When it was first enacted, it established that between 10 and 20 per cent of council seats at various levels should be allocated to women.

Here, the legislature adopted a series of measures aimed at supporting and strengthening women's participation in public life, with Law No. 21 of 1979 allocating 30 seats in legislative council constituencies to women. On the grounds that the allocation of seats effectively circumscribed the role of women, these measures were repealed. Law No. 188 of 1986, on the People's Assembly, and Law No. 145 of 1988, on local councils, then offered women the opportunity to compete for all seats.

Women succeeded in winning a number of seats in the general elections following the repeal of the relevant law, although there was still a marked discrepancy between the number of seats held by men and those held by women. In 1995, women won 9 seats in the People's Assembly. The current Deputy Speaker of the Assembly is a woman, while 15 seats in the Advisory Council and 437 in local councils were held by women in 1998. Egyptian women play a prominent role in the work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and have presided over a number of its committees and conferences. There have

also been women members of all Egyptian parliamentary delegations whether on official visits or to international conferences.

II. Public office and public functions

In conformity with the general principle established in article 40 of the Constitution, article 14 thereof, accords all citizens, male and female and without discrimination or prejudice, the right to public employment. The legislation relating to State employees and public-sector workers contains nothing that violates the constitutional principle of equality between men and women, and it may rather be seen as according certain advantages to women out of regard for their role as mothers and providers of childcare without thereby prejudicing their employment status. Women have made considerable progress in gaining access to government employment, and the percentage of women in government posts rose from 30 per cent in 1992 to 45 per cent in 1996. The percentage of senior posts held by women in government also rose, from 11.8 in 1992 to 15 in 1996, as a direct result of the success of programmes for female education and literacy and because women are now obtaining advanced academic degrees. The steady increase in the numbers of women working in government testifies to the commitment of State agencies to the principle of equality.

In the October 1999 cabinet reshuffle, the posts of Minister of the Environment and Minister of Social Affairs both went to women. For the first time, in 1998, a women was appointed president of a judicial body (the Office of the Administrative Prosecutor).

III. Trade union membership

According to the latest trade union survey (1996-2001), there are now some 700 women trade unionists, accounting for 39 per cent of the total. The percentage of women holding senior posts on trade union councils has reached 15.8.

IV. The non-governmental sector

Article 55 of the Constitution states that citizens, whether men or women, shall have the right to establish associations in the manner laid down by law. Law No. 153 of 1999, concerning non-governmental associations, and the previous Law No. 32 of 1964 contain nothing in the way of restrictions that would prevent women from establishing private associations or institutions in any sphere of activity or restrictions that relate to the marital status of women seeking to do so.

The State's policy has been to encourage women to establish private associations that provide services to women and seek to promote their social, cultural and economic advancement and their health, facilitate their integration in society and enhance their role in and their contribution to the community. Through the Ministry of Social Affairs the State has helped to support the services offered by the non-governmental sector, and its efforts have helped to promote the establishment of the following facilities:

(a) Nurseries and child day-care centres for working mothers and others;

(b) Offices offering advisory services;

(c) Family-planning centres;

(d) Services centres for working women (meals, clothing and cleaning);

(e) Centres to train young girls in needlework;

(f) Vocational training centres for handicrafts;

(g) Rehabilitation centres for young girls suffering from physical and mental disabilities;

(h) Women's clubs for development training.

As of 1997, there were some 330 associations working in the field of women's services and a further 14,748 offering social services in the wider sense of the term. These associations are active in all fields and work in cooperation with the Government and the relevant international organizations.

Article 8

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations.

Women began to be recruited by the Egyptian diplomatic service in the 1960's, and they have occupied progressively higher positions up to that of ambassador. In 1998, there were 143 women diplomats at all levels, representing 15.3 per cent of all those employed in the service.

Women have achieved notable success in the field at the international and regional (inter-Arab and inter-African) levels, have repeatedly represented Egypt in a skilful manner at all kinds of international meetings and have frequently been elected as members or chairpersons of committees of international organizations and their subsidiary bodies. Some 18 per cent of those employed in international and regional organizations and bodies and in Egyptian diplomatic missions are women.

Women head diplomatic missions in a number of Egyptian embassies, and Egypt participated in the conferences on women held in Mexico City in 1975, in Copenhagen in 1980 and in Nairobi in 1985. The wife of the President of the Republic represented Egypt at the adoption of the Geneva Declaration for Rural Women in February 1992, and led the Egyptian delegation at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995.

In keeping with the Committee's general recommendation No. 8 of 1988, Egypt sees to it that women are included in all its delegations to international meetings and conferences.

Article 9

1. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality. They shall ensure in particular that neither marriage to an alien nor change of nationality by the husband during marriage shall automatically change the nationality of the wife, render her stateless or force upon her the nationality of the husband.

2. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.

Article 5 of the Constitution states that Egyptian nationality shall be regulated by law. The Nationality Law, Law No. 26 of 1975, is in conformity with all the provisions of the relevant international instruments in this regard, and it seeks to reduce instances of statelessness and avoid cases of dual nationality in order to mitigate the effects of conflicts of laws at the international level. The approach taken by the Egyptian legislature has been to systematize the rules governing Egyptian nationality by combining the principles of nationality by parentage and those of nationality by place of birth (jus sanguinis and jus soli).

The provisions of Law No. 26 abide by the principle of full equality between men and women in all matters relating to the bestowal, revocation and forfeiture of nationality, and they regulate the effects of marriage on the nationality of either spouse and of their children. The provisions of the Law are reviewed in detail hereunder.

1. An Egyptian national is whoever is born to an Egyptian father or whoever is born in Egypt to an Egyptian mother and whose father is of unknown nationality or is stateless, or whose paternity is not legally determined, or to parents of unknown nationality. A foundling in Egypt is deemed to have been born there failing proof to the contrary (art. 2). An Egyptian national is also whoever is born outside Egypt to an Egyptian mother and whose paternity is unknown or whose father is stateless or is of unknown nationality, and who, having his or her habitual place of residence in Egypt, opts for Egyptian nationality within a year of attaining his or her majority (art. 3).

2. The acquisition by a foreign man of Egyptian nationality does not entail its acquisition by his wife unless she declares her desire for such and the marriage is not dissolved within two years of that declaration other than by the death of the husband. Minors do not acquire Egyptian nationality if their habitual place of residence is outside Egypt, but they retain the right to the original nationality of their parents. If minors acquire Egyptian nationality, they shall be required, upon their majority, to choose which nationality they shall retain (art. 6). A woman does not lose her Egyptian nationality as a result

of the dissolution of her marriage unless she regains her original nationality, or marries a foreigner and acquires his nationality (art. 8).

3. A foreign women who marries an Egyptian man does not acquire Egyptian nationality unless she expressly declares her desire to do so and her marriage does not end before two years have elapsed since her declaration, other than through the death of her husband (art. 7). Equally, she does not lose her Egyptian nationality as a result of the dissolution of her marriage unless she regains her original nationality, or marries a foreigner and acquires his nationality (art. 8).

4. An Egyptian man who marries a foreign women and acquires her nationality loses his Egyptian nationality, but may retain his Egyptian nationality for himself, his wife and his minor children by expressing his desire to do so. Equally, an Egyptian women whose husband has lost his Egyptian nationality does not lose her Egyptian nationality unless she expresses her desire to acquire the new nationality of her husband. She enjoys the same right as her husband to retain her Egyptian nationality, while minors lose their Egyptian nationality should their parents legally acquire a new nationality, and can opt for Egyptian nationality when they reach their majority (arts. 10 and 11).

5. An Egyptian woman who marries a foreign man retains her nationality unless she declares her desire to acquire the nationality of her husband and has the legal right to do so. If the marriage is not valid according to Egyptian law, but is valid according to the law of the husband's country, she remains an Egyptian national (art. 12).

6. An Egyptian woman whose nationality is revoked or forfeited as a result of marriage can always retain her Egyptian nationality if her marriage is dissolved (art. 13).

7. The revocation or forfeiture of nationality in legally sanctioned circumstances will have no effect on any other person but the individual involved (art. 17).

8. Any decisions relating to nationality must appear in the Official Gazette, and the rules and regulations governing nationality must be published, so that they can be contested by all, without prejudice to the rights of others (art. 22).

The above information demonstrates that Egyptian law conforms to the provisions of article 9 (1) of the Convention (on equal rights with regard to nationality), in that a women does not have to change nationality unless she declares her desire to do so, and that she will not have a nationality forced upon her by virtue of her marriage to, or naturalization of, her husband. The law also guarantees that she will not be rendered stateless, or forced to accept another nationality, and that she has the right to revert to her Egyptian nationality should her marriage be dissolved. This conforms to the broad goals and objectives of the Convention.

As for the nationality of minors, Egyptian law adopts an approach based on a combination of nationality by parentage and nationality by place of birth, as they apply in international and comparative law. Thus, children acquire the nationality of the father, but can choose to revert to their original nationality upon reaching their majority, if the father, being a foreigner, acquires Egyptian nationality, or, being an Egyptian national, forfeits his nationality by virtue of acquiring a foreign nationality. According to the principle of nationality by birthplace, a minor acquires Egyptian nationality if he or she is born in Egypt to an Egyptian mother and a father of unknown nationality, or a stateless father, or to parents of unknown nationality, or if he or she is a foundling. The law adopts the approach of seeking to avoid legal disputes arising from dual-nationality status and any adverse effects on the interests of a minor. This in no way jeopardizes the principle of equality, but simply requires that such matters be regulated and resolved at the international level through bilateral agreements. Thus, the law stipulates that any international treaties and conventions on nationality which Egypt enters into with foreign States are legally enforceable, even if their provisions conflict with Egyptian law. This ensures some degree of stability in the situation that pertains subsequent to the conclusion of

such treaties. Egypt has made a reservation with respect to article 9 (2) for the legal reasons mentioned above.

One of the recommendations made at the first National Conference on Women was aimed at easing the material burdens placed on the children of an Egyptian mother and foreign father. Ministry of Education ordinance No. 353 of 20 December 1994 provides that where such a mother is divorced, widowed or in need, her children shall be treated as Egyptian nationals, enjoying exemption from the payment of school fees. Such fees shall be reduced by half in other cases.

With regard to travel documents for women and minors, article 7 of Law No. 97 of 1959, which deals with passports, stipulates that Egyptian nationals, irrespective of gender, have the right to apply for a passport. Children can have their names added either to the mother's or father's passport, or can have their own passport, providing they have obtained the consent of their legal guardians.

Article 10

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

(a) The same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas; this equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training;

(b) Access to the same curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of the same quality;

(c) The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods;

(d) The same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants;

(e) The same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes, particularly those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women;

(f) The reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely;

(g) The same opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education;

(h) Access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning.

The 1971 Constitution defines the State's responsibility for education. It states that education was a right, guaranteed by the State, and compulsory at the primary level. The State has an obligation to work towards extending the compulsory period to other levels (art. 18 of the Constitution). Education in State educational institutions is free at all levels (art. 20). Article 21 states that the eradication of illiteracy is a national duty, for which all the resources of the people should be harnessed. Law No. 139 of 1981 on education gave these goals official status, making education compulsory for all Egyptian children over six years old, boys and girls. The compulsory period was extended to nine academic years. The Law provided penalties for guardians and parents who failed to observe this obligation towards their children (art. 19 of the aforementioned Law). The Law did not discriminate in any way against females, in regard to either level or type of education, or the curriculum followed, which should be the same for girls and boys. In fact, State efforts to put in place the necessary development plans in order to face one of the most important challenges, namely, the education of women, are close to realizing complete capacity for all children, boys and girls, of compulsory-education age. The plans also deal with school drop-outs and the eradication of female illiteracy, whether the latter is a result of dropping out of school or of falling through the net of compulsory education owing to age. The relevant plans and programmes in the field of women's education have led to noticeable advances in women's access to education, to an increase in their level of education, and to progress in the fight against dropping out of school and the eradication of illiteracy. Similar advances have been made in women's participation in the educational process itself, and in curricula and activities, as the following will show:

I. Pre-university education

I. Percentage of females among those enrolled at all educational levels

Level	Percentage of females	
	1992/93	1998/99
(a) Elementary	-	47.62
(b) Primary	45.20	46.69
(c) Preparatory	44.70	46.65
(d) Secondary (general)	45.20	49.63
(e) Secondary (industrial)	28.70	34.65
(f) Secondary (agricultural	23.70	20.87
(g) Secondary (commercial)	68.40	61.82
All levels		45.95

Numbers of schools, classes and students at different levels

Level	No. of schools	No. of classes	Boys	Girls	Total students
Elementary	3,172	10,376	171,868	156,272	328,140
Primary	15,566	173,520	3,918,891	3,432,227	7,351,118
Preparatory	7,325	90,453	2,215,274	1,937,350	
Total: basic education	26,063	279,349	6,306,033	5,525,849	11,831,882
Single classroom co-educational	68	98	1,745	976	2,730
Single classroom Girls	2,260	2,260		44,820	44,820

Secondary:					
General	1,562	24,514	487,984	480,724	968,708
Industrial	718	24,066	547,186	290,139	837,325
Agricultural	154	5,118	146,498	38,643	185,141
Commercial	895	22,080	316,872	512,994	829,866
Technical	1,767	51,264	1,010,556	841,776	1,852,332
All levels	3,329	75,778	1,498,540	1,322,500	2,821,040
Grand total	31,720	357,480	7,806,327	6,894,145	14,700,472

2. University education

Law No. 49 of 1972 regulated university education on a basis of equality of men and women. Women made advances in university education as follows:

(a) The proportion of women studying at university level increased from 34.5 per cent in 1982/83 to 40.8 per cent in 1996/97.

(b) The percentage of women studying in institutions of higher education increased as follows:

Item	Number of female students	Percentage	Total number
Cairo University			
Institute of Nursing	30	41.70	72
Alexandria University			
Institute of Nursing	224	100	224
Physical education for girls	167	100	167
Tanta University			
Institute of Nursing	303	100	303
Zaqaziq University			
Physical education for girls	172	100	172

Zaqaziq Higher Institute			
of Nursing	320	100	320
Banha Institute of Nursing	178	100	178
Hilwan University			
Faculty of Home			
Economics	311	65.90	472
Faculty of Physical			
Education for Girls	340	100	340
Manufiyah University			
Home Economics	375	78.50	478
Higher Institute of Nursing	137	100	137
'Ain Shams University			
Higher Institute of Nursing	142	100	142
Women's Faculty	6,367	100	6,367
Total	96.80	96.90	9,914

3. Post-graduate education

Women have had numerous success in this field too. The proportion of women members of faculty rose from 29.35 per cent in 1990/91 to 31.7 per cent in 1996/97.

II. Drop-out rates and the eradication of illiteracy

The President of the Republic issued a decree that the 1990s should be considered the Decade for the Eradication of Illiteracy. As a consequence, Law No. 8 of 1991 was promulgated; it concerns adult education and eradication of illiteracy, and declares these objectives to be a national duty and responsibility, binding upon all State institutions. Article 2 of this Law defines the goal of educating the illiterate up to the first elementary level of basic education.

The eradication of female illiteracy is considered one of the most important challenges Egypt faces as a developing country. Nevertheless, significant progress has been through local efforts and in collaboration with international organizations. Female illiteracy has been reduced from 84 per cent in 1960 to 51 per cent in 1996. At the present time, the illiteracy rates among women in Egypt are higher than those among men in the older age groups for the following historical reasons:

(a) The lengthy distances that had to be travelled in order to attend school was one of the main obstacles impeding female education in rural areas;

(b) Families had insufficient money to spend on education;

(c) The content of school textbooks did not meet the various needs of students;

(d) Opportunities for female education were lacking in remote areas and poor environments in which it was difficult to provide educational services;

(e) In some areas, customs and traditions induced families to refrain from educating their girls;

(f) Marriages were contracted at an early age.

In 1978, in cooperation with UNESCO, the State established an adult education centre, with the goal of eradicating illiteracy among housewives of childbearing age, and training them for income-generating work. In 1991, the Organization for the Eradication of Illiteracy was established, with the aim of compulsorily eradicating illiteracy among the 15-35 age group.

Community schools have been set up in cooperation with UNICEF in rural Upper Egypt, with a view to the eradication of female illiteracy. Currently, through the relevant ministries, a scheme is being established whereby female graduates undertake to give one year's public service for the eradication of illiteracy among working people, based in education departments in the workplace.

Drop-out rates

The drop-out rate for compulsory education (at primary level) in 1997/98 was 7 per cent among girls, as against 1.21 per cent for boys. At the preparatory level, that rate was 3.73 per cent among

boys and 2.25 per cent among girls, compared with 11.5 per cent and 9.9 per cent respectively in 1990/91. Recently, the incidence of girls' dropping out and repeating academic years has decreased significantly, particularly in urban areas. Furthermore, success rates at all educational levels have increased. State plans to reduce drop-out rates are based on linking the educational process with the environment, improving educational methods and developing curricula, making them directly relevant to the community.

The phenomenon of dropping out of school can be attributed to the following causes:

(a) As a result of economic factors, the family is forced to send children out to work at an early age, particularly in areas specializing in particular types of production;

(b) Sometimes, authority figures are themselves illiterate and fail to appreciate the importance of education, focusing their attention rather on income generation;

(c) The fact that girls in rural areas drop out of school can also be attributed to certain social customs, such as early marriage;

(d) Families do not agree to having their daughters taught by male teachers;

(e) In some cases, the school is so far from the home that the family refuses to send its girls there;

(f) Low-income families make do with educating their male children alone .

The State has adopted a number of measures to combat this phenomenon, as described hereunder.

Single classroom schools, community schools and small-scale schools have been set up and enrol girls aged between 8 and 14 at the primary level; the Ministry of Education has also issued instructions that the enrolment age at preparatory level must be raised to 18. The Public Institute for Adult Education and the Eradication of Illiteracy has been created to help to offer an opportunity for education to those who previously dropped through the education net. In 1993, in recognition of the fact that academic curricula are also a factor in the phenomenon of the abandonment of education, a

conference was held, under the chairpersonship of Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, on the development of primary education. One of the conference's key recommendations concerned the need to increase the number and variety of educational activities in academic curricula by at least 30 per cent so as to stimulate children's interest in education and study.

The following table shows the number and percentage of children that dropped out of preparatory school in the period between 1990/91 and 1997/98. The success of Government efforts in this regard have resulted in a marked decline in the year-on-year proportion of children dropping out of school, as illustrated hereunder.

Numbers and percentages of boys and girls dropping out of preparatory school

Academic year	Boys			Girls			Total		
	Enrolled	Drop-outs	Percentage	Enrolled	Drop-outs	Percentage	Enrolled	Drop-outs	Percentage
1990/1991	1,532,052	176,794	11.5	1,241,437	123,045	9.9	2,773,489	299,839	10.8
1991/1992	1,222,886	70,034	5.73	996,097	82,122	8.24	2,218,983	152,156	6.86
1992/1993	1,216,689	64,081	5.3	996,253	49,801	5.0	2,212,942	113,882	5.16
1993/1994	1,282,462	53,787	4.19	1,037,632	34,378	3.3	2,320,094	88,165	3.8
1994/1995	1,287,447	73,051	5.67	1,075,314	48,388	4.5	2,362,761	121,439	5.14
1995/1996	1,326,359	62,783	4.7	1,125,567	36,738	3.26	2,451,926	99,521	4.06
1996/1997	1,366,672	50,842	3.72	1,178,497	34,196	2.9	2,545,169	85,038	3.34
1997/1998	1,437,985	53,700	3.73	1,248,967	33,105	2.65	2,686,952	86,805	3.23

III. Percentage of women in educational positions

Because of women's interest in this area, the percentage of women in educational positions has increased significantly, as follows:

Level or type of school	Percentage of women in educational positions	
	1992/93	1997/98
(a) Elementary	51.76	52.30
(b) Preparatory	44.04	42.40
(c) Secondary	35.70	36.90
(d) Industrial	25.09	34.11
(e) Agricultural	23.38	28.00
(f) Commercial	45.50	46.20
(g) Teacher training		49.10
(h) University		31.70

IV. Academic curricula and activities

Physical education and arts subjects of various kinds have been introduced as basic subjects in the education of girls at all levels. The National Women's Committee also called for the inclusion of the Convention on Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child among subjects to be taught from the earliest stage of education.

The Ministry of Education is currently engaged in a detailed review of academic curricula with a view to incorporating information on all human-rights instruments at various levels of education in order to promote awareness of these rights, to ensure their enjoyment, and to counter any incompatible ideas, assumptions or practices.

The endeavours that have been made to develop educational curricula in Egypt, particularly at the primary and preparatory levels, are characterized by their comprehensive and democratic approach to

the process of educational reform and development, since the philosophy underlying the development of the curricula takes into consideration the views, concerns and particularities of all sections of society and is not confined solely to the viewpoint of educationalists. This gives a clear indication of the manifold dimensions of the development of curricula and the various subjects and concepts that must be incorporated therein.

One of the main principles that Egypt has adopted in regard to the development of curricula is the need to clearly shift the emphasis from the quantitative to the qualitative aspects of knowledge, from teaching to learning and from concentration on memorization by rote to development of the student's ability to think in a critical manner, solve problems and take decisions.

In recent years, a number of important issues and topics have arisen which must be taught to pupils and students since they all have a bearing on daily life and, more generally, on life in the twenty-first century with all its scientific, social, economic, technological and political changes. These issues are:

Human rights
The rights of the child
The prevention of discrimination against women
Environmental conservation and embellishment
Preventive and therapeutic health care
Proper use and development of resources
Population growth and its effect on development
Legal awareness of rights and obligations
Traffic awareness
Tourism and development of tourist awareness
Respect for work and the quality of production
Life skills
National unity
Tolerance and education for peace
Globalization and integration among the peoples of the world
Rationalization of consumption and consumer protection

Appropriate concepts concerning these issues, including human rights, have been incorporated in the developed curricula.

Competition for writers of textbooks

In accordance with the recommendations of the conferences on curricula development, an international competition is organized for writers of school textbooks. The author's ability to incorporate these issues in the textbook is one of the conditions of entry and also one of the criteria on which the jury selects the winning book. This ensures that the authors take a serious approach to those concepts in their books.

Editing and publication of textbooks

During the editing and publication of school textbooks, specialists ensure that the requisite concepts are included in the academic content of each book, to which they add material designed to emphasize and strengthen those concepts.

Copy books for related activities

In order to ensure that the student understands the issues and concepts set forth in the school textbook, a copy book containing a number of practical activities is also supplied with a view to providing him or her with an opportunity to practise and apply these concepts in his or her everyday conduct.

Teachers' manuals

Since these issues have been incorporated in the curricula only relatively recently, the teachers' manuals accompanying the school textbooks carefully explain them to the teacher and indicate the ways in which they should be presented to students in various classes.

Teacher training

In order to ensure that the teacher understands these issues and concepts, they are emphasized and highlighted during training courses at which various strategies are also proposed for the teaching of these issues and concepts in such a way as to instil them into the minds of students as a practical activity. For example, while explaining a question that needs to be illustrated by data, mathematics

teachers can take the opportunity to enrich their students' tourist awareness by providing them with data on tourist sites, numbers of visitors, and so on.

Within the framework of Egypt's commitment to the instruments concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms, considerable attention has been paid to human-rights issues in several fields, including human rights in general, the rights of the child, women's rights and the prevention of discrimination against women

This process required a study of the Arab, regional and international instruments defining those rights, after which meetings were held with specialists in the concepts involved in the issue of human rights, as in the case of all other issues, in order to analyze them and classify them as basic or subsidiary concepts ranging from simple to profound in a manner consistent with the different age levels of the various academic grades. These analyses were subsequently expressed in the form of a sequential matrix of concepts in order to facilitate the selection of those most relevant to the subjects studied at each academic level and grade.

Concepts involved in the issue of human rights

The right to a decent life
The right to education and further education
The right to comprehensive health care
The right to wholesome food
The right to freedom of travel and movement
The rights of children, women and older persons in time of war
The right to participate in political and social life
The right to work
The right to freedom of assembly
The right to enjoy leisure time
The right to freedom of choice and decision making
The right to own property
The right to form a family
The right to consideration and respect
The right to suitable housing
The right to personal liberty
The rights of civilians in time of war
The rights of families in time of war
The right to engage in religious observance
The right to enjoy peace and security
The right to safe childbirth
The right to practise sport
The right to differ

The academic curricula up to the third preparatory grade have already been developed, and the process is currently being completed up to the end of the secondary level. Preparations are also being

made to hold a second conference on the development of secondary-level curricula, and preliminary studies and research are being undertaken in order to ensure that this conference can be held at an early date.

With regard to the inclusion of human rights issues in the academic curricula for this age level, it is expected that they will continue to be taught through the above-mentioned amalgamation method involving the selection of concepts most appropriate to this age level. This requires more in-depth study of ways in which such issues can be taught in a direct and subject-oriented manner.

In addition to the amalgamation and integration method, it has been proposed that secondary-level curricula should be based on a core curriculum in which a number of basic academic subjects would be studied by all pupils, who would also be able to choose a number of other subjects in accordance with their own wishes and predilections.

A separate syllabus might be formulated within the core curriculum for human rights, civic education or life skills in general, or, alternatively, students might be offered the choice of a syllabus comprising some important issues suited to the requirements of their age level. As in the case of the primary and preparatory levels, care will have to be taken to train teachers in the best ways to approach these concepts.

Article 11

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

(a) The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;

(b) The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;

(c) The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training;

(d) The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work;

(e) The right to social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave;

(f) The right to protection of health and safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction.

2. In order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, States Parties shall take appropriate measures;

(a) To prohibit, subject to the imposition of sanctions, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or of maternity leave and discrimination in dismissals on the basis of marital status;

(b) To introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances;

(c) To encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in particular through promoting the establishment and development of a network of childcare facilities;

(d) To provide special protection to women during pregnancy in types of work proved to be harmful to them.

3. Protective legislation relating to matters covered in this article shall be reviewed periodically in the light of scientific and technological knowledge and shall be revised, repealed or extended as necessary.

Women and the right to work under the Egyptian Constitution

Articles 8, 10, 11, 13 , 14 and 17 of the Egyptian Constitution stipulate that work is a right, a duty and an honour guaranteed by the State. It cannot be imposed except by law and for the purpose of performing public service, and deserves equitable remuneration. The State is obliged to provide opportunities for citizens, and to ensure that public appointments are open to all. The State must enable women to combine family obligations with work responsibilities, and ensure women's equality with men in all fields. It must also provide health insurance and social services, and invalidity, unemployment and retirement benefits to all citizens, in accordance with the law. The State must similarly protect motherhood and the child. Concrete expression is thereby given to the principles of

the right to work and the right to free choice of employment, and it is guaranteed that work cannot be imposed and that opportunities will be available. The State's obligation to ensure women's equality with men in all fields is clarified, as is its obligation to enable women to combine family obligations with their right to work. The State must also provide work-related health and social-insurance services and protect motherhood and the child.

II. Women and the right to work under Egyptian law

Egyptian labour laws have made the principles laid down by the Constitution obligatory, since they have given legal protection to the right to work by making it a crime to violate or attempt to violate that right. They have also made it a crime to flout the laws governing the employment of women, as the following details make clear:

1. Penal Code

(a) Article 275 of the Penal Code (Law No. 58 of 1937, modifying Law No. 34 of 1951) states that it is a criminal offence to violate another person's right to work, or that persons' right to employ a third party, or, in order to prevent another person from employing a third party, to use force or violence or illegitimate means such as stalking, or concealing equipment or clothing. The penalty for that offence, or for incitement thereto, is a maximum prison sentence of two years, in addition to a maximum fine of 100 Egyptian pounds.

(b) Reference is made in part one, chapter III, section 8, of this report to the articles of the Penal Code which make it an offence to assault women or use violence against them.

2. Law No. 139 of 1981 concerning the Labour Code

Article 150 of the Law establishes a general provision guaranteeing the applicability to female workers of all the stipulations made with regard to the employment of workers. No differentiation is to be made between them on the basis of the employment involved, and the provisions governing the employment of women must not be infringed. Articles 152 and 153 authorize the Minister of

Manpower to define the conditions under which women are permitted to work at night. He or she also has the right to define the types of work which are harmful to women's health or morals and in which women may not be employed (such as the production of explosives, or in mines, quarries and furnaces). Employers of women workers on night-shift must provide the guarantees necessary for their security, protection and safe transportation. As part of the constitutional obligation to protect motherhood and the child, and in order to ensure that women are able to combine family obligations with their work, the law gives women the following rights:

(a) Article 158 provides that owners of establishments employing more than 100 women shall set up a nursery. Where a smaller number of women in employed, the law stipulates that establishments located in one area shall participate in the cost of providing a nursery.

(b) The articles of this Law give a comprehensive list of reasons for termination of employment and dismissal unrelated to marital status, pregnancy or maternity.

(c) Article 174 of the Law states that any infraction of th. rovisions related to the employment of women is a crime, for which a fine shall be imposed.

3. Law No. 47 of 1978 governing State employment and Law No. 48 of 1978 concerning regulation of public sector employment

Both these Laws contain similar provisions with regard to women, in accordance with the precepts set out in the Constitution regarding the State guarantee that women shall be enabled to combine family obligations with work responsibilities. Details of these provisions are as follows:

(a) There are no provisions in either Law that could be considered to violate the principle of equality between men and women. That includes all the provisions regulating employment and the rights and responsibilities arising therefrom, remuneration, promotion and health and social insurance.

(b) The provisions of both Laws guarantee the granting of rights to women, particularly in the context of the constitutional obligation to protect maternity, the child and the family. Details are as follows:

- Both men and women have the right to take leave without pay in order to accompany their spouse abroad.

- The laws give a comprehensive list of reasons for termination of service unrelated to marital status, pregnancy or maternity.

- Women working in government institutions have the right to work half time if they so request, receiving half pay and allowances, including overtime, and paying half of the taxes (Prime Minister's Decree No. 187 of 2000).

4. The Children's Act No. 12 of 1996

The Children's Act No. 12 of 1996 contains a special section devoted to working women which stipulates different treatment to be afforded to women working in the government and public sectors and those working in the private sector. The Law accords working women the right to the following privileges:

- Three months' post-natal maternity leave on full pay on three occasions during her working life (art. 80).

- Two rest breaks of one hour on full pay for a period of up to two years after the birth for the purpose of breastfeeding the child (art. 71).

- The right to two years' unpaid leave for the purpose of child rearing, on three occasions during her working life (art. 72).

5. Labour conventions

Egypt joined the International Labour Organization in 1936, and has acceded to 118 of its conventions, including Convention No. 41 concerning Employment of Women during the Night

(revised 1934); Convention No. 89 concerning Night Work of Women Employed in Industry (revised 1948) and Convention No. 100 concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value (1951). These conventions are considered to have the same legislative status as Egyptian laws, and to be equally binding. Furthermore, the relevant labour laws incorporate the precepts and obligations enshrined in the provisions of the said conventions.

6. Law No. 50 of 1977 concerning childcare facilities

This Law was enacted with a view to encouraging the establishment of childcare facilities for children under six years old, thus facilitating women's entry into the labour market by the provision of the necessary protection for children during working hours.

7. Laws concerning social insurance and social security

(a) Law No. 79 of 1975, concerning social insurance, applies to those employed by the Government and in the public and private sectors.

This Law provides general precepts applicable to both men and women, covering entitlement and the conditions attached thereto, including cases where a husband is entitled to his wife's salary and vice versa. In certain circumstances, this Law gives a divorced women entitlement to her husband's pension (art. 105). Article 112 gives a widow the right to combine her own income or personal pension with her husband's pension, with no limitations.

(b) Law No. 112 of 1980, concerning social insurance for the labour force, provides coverage for all working groups not covered by the first Law, such as agricultural labourers, household servants, employers, building labourers, part-time and seasonal workers, owners of agricultural land, fishermen and trainees. The Law provides coverage for all groups, without discriminating between men and women, and specifies the rules for participation and those entitled to participate.

Law No. 30 of 1977, concerning social security, is intended to guarantee a minimum income for families with no insurance coverage, including orphans, widows, divorcees, pregnant women, the

totally incapacitated, the elderly, the families of prisoners, invalids, breastfeeding mothers, and families with no breadwinner. The Law guarantees that they shall be provided with a monthly pension of a lump-sum emergency payment.

III. The right to work and the actual position of women with regard to work

Women have made significant gains in Egypt as a result of efforts made by the State, its development plans implementing the policy of encouraging women to work and opening every field to them, and the success of educational policies in raising educational levels and eradicating illiteracy, as the following indicates:

Women represented 31.2 per cent of employees in all branches of government service in 1998, an additional 534,158 women over the 1993 figure (see Appendix, Tab. 1).

The number of women in top executive positions in the government sector rose from 2.8 per cent in 1981 to 13 per cent in 1993 and 16.7 per cent in 1998 (see Appendix, Tab. 2).

Women represented 29.6 per cent of all those working in science or technology in 1996.

The number of women achieving masters degrees or doctorates reached 65.8 per cent in 1996.

The percentage of women working in various fields is as follows:

Journalism - 25.20 per cent in 1994

Diplomatic corps - 15.30 per cent in 1998, compared with 14 per cent in 1995

Broadcasting and television - 33.80 per cent in 1992

and, for the period 1996/97:

Elementary schools – 52.30 per cent

Preparatory schools – 42.40 per cent

General secondary schools – 36.90 per cent

Industrial education schools – 34.11 per cent

Agricultural secondary schools – 28.00 per cent

Commercial secondary schools – 46.20 per cent

Teacher training colleges – 49.01 per cent

University teaching – 31.70 per cent.

There has been a significant increase – from 18.7 per cent in 1984 to 21.2 per cent in 1999 – in the proportion of women working in the liberal professions.

IV. Social services and training

The following table illustrates the scale of activities that have been pursued by the Government through the Ministry of Social Affairs in the field of social services and training for women.

Item	Number	Number of users	Remarks
Women's clubs	571	49,460	510 subsidized and 61 self-supporting
Immigrant centres	185	12,756	160 run by welfare associations and 25 by development associations
Vocational training centres	62	3,932	Centres include 234 departments
Family guidance and counselling offices	104	7,720	Number of users equal to number of persons completing service in 1998
Associations for social development	2,457	13,295	Number of users equals the number that completed their training in 1998
Social welfare associations	887	8,405	Number of users equals the number that completed their training in 1998
Social rehabilitation offices	115	39,242	Including those suffering from deafness, blindness, physical and mental impairments, leprosy, tuberculosis and heart problems

Foster family project	-	3,964	Paid and unpaid foster families, including those offering foster homes
Productive families project	-	25,808	Number of families that completed service in 1998
Social security net	-	318,849	Including monthly stipends and assistance, one-off emergency payments and disaster funds
Nurseries	6,435	470,987	Comprising 17,173 classes
Children's clubs	458	46,512	Comprising both welfare and development clubs

With respect to the social services responsible for encouraging and supporting women, and enabling them to combine family obligations with work responsibilities, State efforts led to an increase in the number of childcare facilities from 2,355 in 1983 to 6,435 in 1998. Twenty-five centres have been opened in order to offer working women reasonably-priced services such as the provision of fully- or half-prepared meals, cleaning and ironing services.

The non-governmental sector is very active in this field, through a network of local development associations which has expanded from 3,472 in 1995 to some 3,889, all spread throughout the Republic.

One hundred and four offices have been established in order to provide family advice for women working away from their original homes.

V. Training

In Egypt, the State provides some professional training through the network of technical secondary schools and higher educational institutions. The non-governmental sector provides professional-training centres.

The policy of encouraging women to break into the field of government work has succeeded in raising the proportion of women enrolling in technical secondary schools from 43.3 per cent in 1991 to 45.6 per cent in 1997/98.

The non-governmental sector's network of local development associations saw an increase in the number of employment and professional-training centres for girls from 1,567 in 1991 to 2,656 in 1998 all spread throughout the Republic.

VI. Women supporting families

Recent studies, based on sample studies, have shown that the proportion of women supporting families has grown to 22 per cent. Bereavement and divorce are considered the two main reasons for women to become breadwinners. Law No. 30 of 1977, concerning social security, covers these cases and assures them of a minimum income, through what are called security pensions for families without breadwinners. The State meets requirements through human-resource-training programmes, and by channelling public resources to environmental, domestic and commercial industries. The "productive-families" project is in the forefront of State projects intended to develop economic resources for the family, together with training projects for rural women.

There are currently 3,025 centres for the training of productive families, located in every village, town and neighbourhood district in Egypt, and used by 25,808 families in 1998. In 1998, 318,849 cases benefited from the social-security law, compared with 204,380 in 1993. Private and public associations are using various means to support the development of local associations, of which there are 3,472 throughout the country.

In this context, it is worth mentioning that the relevant bodies are currently studying how best to implement the recommendations made by the National Conference on Women in Egypt to the effect that all legislation and other measures concerning employment should be reviewed, in order to give a

sustained impetus to women in this field. The relevant authorities are currently considering the means of implementing these recommendations taking the necessary measures for that purpose.

Article 12

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning.

2. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 of this article, States Parties shall ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.

State provision of health care is guaranteed by the Constitution. Articles 16 and 17 guarantee that the State shall provide health services and seek to improve their quality and individual access to them. All citizens have the right to health insurance, and men and women have equal rights to the same services, without prejudice or discrimination. Women can use a range of services relating to pregnancy and post-natal care, and the Ministry of Health has created an extensive network of hospitals, treatment centres, health-care centres and clinics in Egyptian cities and rural areas. By 1998, health-care cover stood at almost 100 per cent, with a ratio of two doctors and two nurses for every 1,000 inhabitants.

The health-insurance scheme offers treatment to State employees, salaried workers and widows, and was extended in 1993 to include schoolchildren. The scheme, which is paid for out of a token contribution by insured persons and employers, makes use of a large network of 25 hospitals and 116 clinics in 16 governorates. It serves the needs of 17.4 million citizens, compared with 15 million in 1995, including students, men, women and children, and does not discriminate on the basis of gender.

Women are given priority access to health-care services, including those provided by private cooperatives. In 1990, there were some 573 local-development cooperatives throughout Egypt, with a further 171 offering services to mothers and children, and 320 providing family-planning services.

The media plays an important role here by broadcasting health-education programmes on television and radio. The purpose of these programmes, sponsored by the Ministry of Health or by the media, is to educate the public about simple and appropriate health-care techniques, to improve general levels of education and culture, and to reduce illiteracy.

The State has been particularly successful in increasing the number of services offered to women and raising awareness about health issues in relation to pregnancy, children and family planning, as the following data show:

1. Life expectancy for women rose from 52 years of age in 1981 to 66.4 in 1998.
2. The mortality rate for nursing infants fell from 76 per 1,000 births in 1980 to 25 in 1998.
3. The infant-mortality rate fell from 11 per 1,000 in 1980 to 2.17 in 1998.
4. The fertility rate fell from 5.28 per cent in 1980 to 3.4 per cent in 1998.
5. The percentage of women using contraception rose from 24 in 1980 to 51.8 in 1998.
6. The number of professionally-assisted births rose from 9.4 per cent in 1980 to 55.2 per cent in 1998.
7. The percentage of children being vaccinated rose from 68 in 1985 to 84.3 in 1998.

The increase in the percentage of children receiving various kinds of vaccination is illustrated in the table below.

Type of vaccination	Boys	Girls
Tuberculosis	98.40	97.90
Triple vaccine	87.20	88.00
Infant polio (triple dose)	89.00	90.30
Hepatitis	81.00	81.80

8. The death rate among women during pregnancy or childbirth fell from 320 per 100,000 in 1986 to 174 in 1993.

9. The percentage of early marriages (under 16 years of age) fell from 16 in 1991 to 11 in 1998, while the proportion of women in the under-nineteen age group who were pregnant or had given birth in 1995 was 10.20 per cent.

10. The percentage of births spaced less than two years apart fell from 30 in 1986 to 25 in 1991.

11. The percentage of women involved in making decisions about fertility rose from 40 in 1986 to 66.6 in 1995.

Abortion

Articles 260 to 264 of Egypt's law on abortion prescribe the penalties for this crime as follows:

(a) A person who causes a women to abort whether by striking her or by any other form of injury shall be punished by a term of imprisonment with hard labour (art. 260).

(b) A person who induces an abortion through the use of drugs or other methods, with or without the woman's consent, shall be punished by a term of imprisonment (art. 261).

Female excision

Female excision is viewed as an old custom which has begun to die out as a result of the education of women in urban areas. The practice continues on a reduced scale in remote rural areas, where it is carried out in secret, far from clinics and hospitals which do not permit it, using primitive methods. Thus, it is not possible to provide statistical data on the practice. The State is tireless in its efforts to eradicate female excision, by extending education, combating illiteracy and directing the media to draw attention to the damaging effects of the practice. The Penal Code also prescribes penalties for those who perform these operations, based on the fact that they are operating as medical practitioners without the requisite licence, and causing injury and suffering to the person who undergoes such an operation.

The Minister of Health and Population issued Ordinance No. 261 of 8 July 1996 prohibiting female excision operations at public and private hospitals and clinics except in cases in which such an operation is clinically indicated by the treating physician.

Pursuant to general recommendation No. 14 of 1990, concerning female excision, and in keeping with general State policies in this regard, particular stress has been laid on the dissemination of proper health information through the media and through government and voluntary endeavours to make families aware of the harm caused by female excision.

Ministers of religion are also helping by making it clear that this custom is not based on any religious teachings.

Article 13

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality between men and women, the same rights, in particular:

(a) The right to family benefits;

(b) The right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit;

(c) The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.

Article 11 of the Constitution contains a general provision which stipulates that the State shall guarantee equality between men and women in political, economic and social life. This principle is reflected in all laws and regulations which Egypt has adopted.

Neither civil law nor commercial law makes any distinction between men and women with regard to the regulations governing civil or commercial competence. Thus, men and women are equal before the law at their majority, and with regard to the circumstances and procedures for declaring legal incompetence and appointing a trustee or guardian. This information has already been covered in part one, chapter III of this report. A woman has full financial independence and legal personality in the exercise of all her rights, including the right to own or inherit property, to perform business, legal and administrative transactions, and to obtain loans or mortgages of all kinds without any restrictions or conditions being imposed on her freedom before or after marriage, or by her father or her husband. Women receive all family benefits (health care and health insurance, etc.) when they are widowed or divorced, in accordance with the laws in force, and are entitled to family support in the absence of the

husband, or if they have custody of children following divorce. This does not adversely affect their own insurance benefit.

Women at all levels, in the Government and elsewhere, are also entitled to special social and health benefits arising from their role as wives, mothers, carers or guardians of children, as was explained in part one of this report.

Egyptian women also participate freely and fully in recreational activities, games, sports and cultural life with girls taking physical education and artistic training as part of their basic education at all levels. There are also university departments for physical education for girls, which are working to create a generation of specialists who will ensure that sports are available to girls throughout their education. Egyptian society is full of women who have gained prominence in sports and the arts, winning sports awards and cultural and artistic prizes at the local, regional and international levels.

Students' sports associations, rural clubs and youth centres throughout the country have done a great deal to encourage the establishment of girls' sports teams and to organize national competitions for these teams as a way of helping to promote sports for girls. These bodies also organize important social, recreational, and cultural activities, such as educational trips and artistic and cultural competitions.

The private sector, as represented by women's associations and other organizations, plays an active part in this domain, using a huge network of associations throughout Egypt.

Article 14

1. States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:

(a) To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;

(b) To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information counselling and services in family planning;

(c) To benefit directly from social security programmes;

(d) To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;

(e) To organize self-help groups and cooperatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment;

(f) To participate in all community activities;

(g) to have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;

(h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.

The Egyptian Constitution pays particular attention to the situation of rural women in Egypt, requiring the State to guarantee them cultural, social and health-care services and to improve the quality of their lives (art. 16). All rural-development plans in Egypt focus on improving the lot of rural women, which is seen as fundamental to achieving progress in this domain. According to statistics for 1996, the proportion of the population living in rural areas rose from 53 per cent in 1991 to 57 per cent.

In line with its rural-development plans, Egypt played an active part in the preparation of the 1992 Geneva Declaration for Rural Women, while government policy has underlined the growing importance of rural women. All the related ministries (Health, Education, Culture, Social Affairs, Agriculture and Local Government) have undertaken projects which are targeted at rural women in general, seeking to improve their lot and meet their needs. The bulk of investment loans are earmarked

for that purpose, as is cooperation from designated international organizations. (The institutional mechanisms, agencies and organizations working for the advancement of women are described in part one, chapter V, of this report, and in the commentary on article 3 of the Convention, in part two).

In addition to government bodies and agencies, private associations, which are supported by the State, have an important role to play, since they promote development at the local, village and town levels, and are connected to all women's associations. Women play a major role in administering or in working in these associations, which cover such areas as health improvement, comprehensive care and family planning. Around 1,746 women's committees were working in rural women's development centres in 1989, with 3,572 associations for health care and social development in the Egyptian countryside, working on family and childcare issues as well as rural community development.

The following is a list of governmental and non-governmental projects aimed at supporting the advancement of rural women:

1. A comprehensive health-care and -development project for rural children, under the auspices of the National Council for the Mother and the Child; the project includes a children's nutrition programme and training in preparation of economic meals, so as to improve children's health;

2. The national campaign to eradicate illiteracy, particularly among rural women, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme;

3. A project to improve the health of rural women, in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund, offering training to expectant mothers and educating women about nutrition;

4. A project to improve family-planning services, in cooperation with the United States Agency for International Development and the United Nations Population Fund;

5. A project to promote self-reliance among rural women, offering them loans for income-generating activities, in cooperation with the International Labour Organization;

6. A project for rural women's development centres, in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund, aimed at helping impoverished women.

And a number of Ministry of Social Affairs projects, which include:

1. A productive-families project aimed at increasing the income of Egyptian families and improving their quality of life, by teaching women certain occupations, agricultural skills and techniques for food production; some 56,545 families had benefited from this programme by 1990, while the figure for 1998 was 25,808;

2. Centres for training in domestic and environmental skills, aimed at modifying consumption patterns and improving quality of life, in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations;

3. Some 491 family-planning centres, which provide Egyptian families with information on contraception and offer fertility treatment;

4. Family guidance and advisory centres to assess and assist newly married couples, offering family guidance and resolving issues relating to family life; there were 75 such centres in 1990. By 1998, the figure had risen to 104 centres, benefiting some 7,720 families.

5. Rural-women-leaders project, aimed at creating a class of leaders who can raise awareness about health matters and help eradicate illiteracy; there were some 1,572 leaders in 1992;

6. Women's clubs, dealing with the issue of women and work, the problems they face and possible solutions; clubs numbered around 443 in 1992 and 571 in 1998.

The State's policies for rural development have been particularly successful in improving health coverage and women's and children's nutrition, increasing the number of births handled by professionals and the number of women using contraception, while reducing the rate of population growth and female illiteracy, as the following shows:

Item	1980	1992	1998
1. Fertility rate	5.28%	3.93%	3.4%
2. Contraception use	24.2%	47.1%	51.8%
3. Vaccination of children (six diseases)		68% (1985)	84.3%
4. Professionally-assisted births	9.4%	33.5%	55.2%
5. Decline in population growth rate (%)	-	2.4%	2.08%
6. Decline in illiteracy	62% (1986)	57.4%	51% (1996)
7. Health coverage		98%	100%
8. Vaccination of women		57%	70.1%

Article 15

1. States Parties shall accord to women equality with men before the law.

2. States Parties shall accord to women, in civil matters, a legal capacity identical to that of men and the same opportunities to exercise that capacity. In particular, they shall give women equal rights to conclude contracts and to administer property and shall treat them equally in all stages of procedure in courts and tribunals.

3. States Parties agree that all contracts and all other private instruments of any kind with a legal effect which is directed as restricting the legal capacity of women shall be deemed null and void.

4. States Parties shall accord to men and women the same rights with regard to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile.

Article 40 of the Egyptian Constitution contains a general provision relating to the principle of equality, stating that all citizens are equal before the law and have the same general rights and obligations. The law does not discriminate against citizens on the basis of gender, ethnic origin, language, religious affiliation or creed. Article 11 requires the State to guarantee that men and women

are treated equally in political, social, cultural and economic life. Article 50 makes it illegal to prevent a person from residing in a particular area, other than in legally sanctioned circumstances. Article 68 stipulates that all citizens have the inalienable right to go to litigation and that the law cannot exempt any administrative action or decision from legal scrutiny. Egypt's legislation conforms to these constitutional principles. Part one, chapter III, of this report has already shown how these principles are enshrined in legislation. Details of the laws in question are found hereunder.

1. Civil competence

The provisions of Civil Law No. 131 of 1948 conform to these principles by stating that the human personality begins with birth and ends with death (art. 29), and the birth must be officially registered (art. 30). By law, every individual must have a name and surname (art. 38).

Article 44 of this Law stipulates that the age of maturity is reached on the twenty-first birthday, at which stage a person enjoys the capacity to reason and has no limitation on his or her legal capacity to enjoy his or her civil rights. Article 45 describes the circumstances in which a person does not have legal capacity, and this includes instances of feebleness of mind, insanity, or being under seven years of age. The article also describes the circumstances in which a person can be declared legally incompetent, which applies to cases of weakness or simpleness of mind. Article 47 stipulates that the provisions concerning the trustee must be applied in the case of persons who do not have, or are deprived of, their legal capacity.

Articles 48, 49 and 50 of the Law stipulate that a person cannot relinquish his or her legal capacity or modify the rules which govern it, and that no one can relinquish his or her personal liberty. It also states that each person who suffers an illegal infraction of his or her rights as a legal person has the right to put a stop to this infraction and seek compensation for any damage that has been done.

The Law also contains provisions relating to contracts and other legal transactions, as well as the administration of finances, and to other legal persons.

None of the abstract and general legal principles referred to above makes any distinction between men and women. No restrictions are placed on women's legal capacity by virtue of marriage or ties of kinship. Thus, upon reaching their majority, women retain their legal capacity, and the right to undertake legal transactions with respect to all their property and work entitlements, and to purchase, inherit and manage their property without restriction or limitation or loss of legal capacity.

According to article 48 of this Law, any restriction on a woman's legal capacity is void, since no one can forfeit his or her legal capacity, or amend its conditions, or relinquish individual liberty, as explained above.

2. Laws on litigation

In accordance with the Constitution, the laws relating to the right to litigation (the Codes of Civil and Commercial, the Code of Criminal Procedure and related laws) stipulate that all citizens have the right to litigation, in accordance with the rules governing capacity to seek legal redress, and the conditions for appointing legal representation in the case of absence or withdrawal of legal capacity. All the general rules apply to men and women without distinction or discrimination, and marriage does not affect these rights. Therefore, women can take part in litigation in all its forms, whether as the plaintiff or the defendant, on the same footing as men, and with the same legal rights. There are Egyptian women working in the legal profession and in juridical organizations (the State Prosecutor's Office and the Administrative Prosecutor's Office, the latter judicial body being currently presided over by a woman). Egyptian women are also involved in work on juvenile cases, since article 121 of the Children's Act No. 12 of 1996 stipulates that a juvenile court shall be made up of one judge and two expert assistants, at least one of whom must be a woman.

Article 16

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

(a) The same right to enter into marriage;

(b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent;

(c) The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution;

(d) The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;

(e) The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights;

(f) The same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and adoption of children, or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;

(g) The same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation;

(h) The same rights for both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property, whether free of charge or for a valuable consideration.

2. The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.

In Egypt, marriage is a contract by mutual consent, and by law it must be concluded by the free, mutual consent of both parties. Since marriage in Egypt is governed by the law on personal status, it is also subject to Shariah law, which imposes obligations on both parties with regard to the validity, conclusion, dissolution and annulment of the marriage.

The law states that the age of consent for males is 18, while that for females is 16. The marriage contract must be concluded and documented in official records, official documents must be issues indicating that the marriage has taken place, and the marital status must appear in the identity papers, in accordance with the rules for registrars and other officials authorized to perform civil marriages, and the provisions of Law No. 260 of 1960, on personal status.

According to Egyptian law, marriage does not affect a woman's financial independence of her husband. A woman retains her first name and surname, which does not change after marriage, and she has complete liberty to manage and dispose of her finances, to conclude contracts and obtain loans, and to perform any other legal transaction, unimpaired by the fact of her marriage.

Women have the right to act as guardians of minors, and, in the case of divorce of dissolution of the marriage contract, to obtain custody of their male children up to the age of 10 and their female children up to the age of 12. They may also seek legal redress if they consider it to be in the interest of minors to extend custody of male children up to the age of 15, and of female children until they marry. The father has the right of frequent access to his children during this period and must provide for them as long as custody lasts.

Women and men share full responsibility for all matters arising from their marriage, including the maintenance and support of the family unit and decisions about the number and spacing of their children; the extent and impact of this shared responsibility differ according to the educational and cultural background of each partner. The State's development plans focus on the eradication of female illiteracy, particularly in backward and rural areas. The State also supports the role of women in sharing with her husband in their commitment to the family and children.

State agencies are currently implementing the recommendations made at the first National Conference on Women (June 1994), by undertaking a detailed study of a standard marriage document with a view to precluding disputes over its validity and the need for legal recourse. The law concerning the procedures for litigation in personal-status cases is also being updated in an attempt to simplify those procedures and reduce the number of conditions attached to them.

In 2000, Law No. 1, regulating certain litigation procedures in matters of personal status law, was promulgated with the purpose of speeding up such procedures and reducing the conditions attached thereto. The Law makes it incumbent upon the Nasser Bank to comply with monetary awards which

have been made to women, and raises the established rate of income tax in order to ensure the implementation of these provisions.

As stated previously, there are no legal impediments to the enjoyment by men and women of the right to enter into marriage with their free and full consent.

With regard to the practical difficulties, although the State has endeavoured to promote all aspects of the economic, social and cultural development of women, who constitute half of society and, in their capacity as citizens, mothers and workers, play an importance and effective role in all spheres of community life, women face a number of difficulties and problems, such as early marriage below the legal age, illiteracy and a low standard of living, which prevent them from freely expressing their frank opinion on their prospective spouse. However, such problems are largely confined to rural and remote areas of the country, and currently affect only a small percentage of women. The State is endeavouring, through its effective development plans and programmes, to eradicate illiteracy and promote greater awareness among women and young girls in remote areas with a view to overcoming and eliminating these difficulties.

Finally, as it submits the present report to the Committee in the hope that the latter will continue to pursue its lofty mission on behalf of all humanity, Egypt has the honour to affirm its readiness to fully respond to any questions or queries about the contents of this report.

APPENDIX

List No. 1

Proportion of jobs held by women in various parts of the government sector

1. Tourism: 53.3%
2. Social insurance and social affairs: 50.8%
3. Health and religious services, and the workforce: 46.6%
4. Culture and the media: 44.3%
5. Education, research and youth: 41%
6. Finance and economics: 38%
7. Management services: 31.3%
8. Trade and commerce: 27.6%
9. Electricity and energy: 25.5%
10. Industry and oil: 34.4%
11. Public administration and local councils: 23%
12. Agriculture and irrigation: 17.6%

List No. 2

Senior posts held by women in various government agencies and activities, and as a proportion of all senior posts held by women in the government sector

1. Finance and economics (371) : 26.7%
2. Culture and the media (183) : 13.2%
3. Education, research and youth (147): 10.5%
4. Management services (89): 6.4%
5. Defence, security and justice (87): 6.3%
6. Transport, communications and civil aviation (88): 6.3%
7. Housing and construction (70): 5%
8. Health and religious services, and the workforce (83): 6%
9. Electricity and energy (65): 4.7%
10. Agriculture and irrigation (53): 3.8%
11. Social insurance and social services (44): 3.2%
12. Industry and oil (37): 2.7%
13. Trade and commerce (24): 1.8%
14. Public administration and local councils (23): 1.7%